





# Egyptian court sentences three militants to death

CAIRO (Agencies) — A Cairo court sentenced three Islamist activists to death Saturday for the slayings of 26 policemen and for plotting to kill 46 other policemen and their families.

Two of the men — still at large — are leaders of Gamaa Islamiya, the strongest Islamist group fighting to overthrow Egypt's secular government. Rifaat Zeidan and Abdul Hamid Osman will have to be retried if they are captured.

The third, Hassan Khalifa, was wounded while trying to kill a policeman. He sat handcuffed to a wheelchair as the judge read the sentence for the 1992-93 killings.

"Thank God," Khalifa said, after hearing the sentencing. "After I've longed for this [for so long], God has been kind and granted me martyrdom."

The sentences must be approved by Egypt's senior Islamic cleric, the grand mufti, but that is largely a formality. Executions in Egypt are usually carried out by hanging.

The three were tried along with 30 other suspects. Judge Ismail Hamdy postponed those sentences until Jan. 27.

Those suspects are

accused of the 1994 shooting attack on a bus carrying Romanian workers in the southern province of Assiut that left no one hurt; and a 1992 attempt to blow up a train carrying tourists to Luxor, the site of many of Egypt's most spectacular Pharaonic sites.

The Islamists, dressed in white galabiyas or traditional gowns, broke into chants of "Allahu Akbar," Arabic for "God is great," and songs of encouragement for Khalifa after the sentencing. All of the Islamists held copies of the Koran, the Muslim holy book, in their hands.

"We feel no fear in dying for the cause of God," Khalifa said. "Prison and execution will not shake our faith in Islam."

The Islamists have waged a five-year campaign aimed at overthrowing Egypt's secular government and replacing it with Islamic rule. More than 1,150 people, mostly police and Islamists, have died since the group stepped up its fight in 1992.

"Islam will continue until God makes it victorious, and until Egypt is under Islam," Khalifa told reporters as police tried to clear the courtroom.

Members of the Jamaa Islamiya have recently

appeared divided as to whether to implement a unilateral ceasefire or increase attacks.

Six gunmen belonging to Gamaa Islamiya opened fire at the Pharaonic temple of Hatshepsut in Luxor on Nov. 17, killing 58 tourists.

There have been several statements reportedly from the group claiming and denying responsibility for the Luxor attack.

Rifaat Ahmad Taha, one of the group's hardline leaders based in Afghanistan, has denied that Gamaa Islamiya had pledged to stop attacks against tourists, the London-based Islamic media monitor reported Saturday.

Such statements were "lies from beginning to end," Mr. Taha was quoted as saying.

The group said that Mr. Taha called their London office to issue his remarks.

Also on Saturday, security forces announced the arrest of 42 members of the Gamaa Islamiya in a week of raids on three northern provinces.

The suspects were said to be "collaborators" of fugitive Islamist leader Munir Mustafa Abdul Hafez, who was killed in a police shootout in mid-December. They are accused of

attempting "to revive the activities of the Gamaa Islamiya and enrolling new recruits," a police spokesman said.

Abdul Hafez was killed in a pre-dawn shootout with police on Dec. 13 in the northern Delta region of Tanta during a raid on his hideout.

He had been sentenced to death for the 1993 murder of Mohammad Al Shimi, the then security chief in Assiut, a Gamaa stronghold.

In another development, President Hosni Mubarak has ratified death sentences passed in October against three Islamist activists for plotting to blow up Khan Al Khalili, Cairo's oldest market, and kill police officers, police officials said speaking on condition of anonymity.

Two of the Islamist activists were sentenced in absentia. The third, Adel Ali Bayoumi Al Sudani, is in custody. Al Sudani is a leader of Gamaa Islamiya's military wing.

President Mubarak ratified the sentences Thursday. Defendants in military trials can only appeal their sentences to the president and must do so within 15 days of his granting approval of the sentence.



HAMAS ANNIVERSARY: Masked Hamas activists on Friday march in Gaza Strip in a rally marking the 10th anniversary of the Islamic Resistance Movement. Hamas was founded by Sheikh Ahmad Yassin at the beginning of the Palestinian intifada (Reuters photo)

## Iraq calls on Turkey to withdraw from north

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq demanded Friday that Turkey withdraw immediately from its northern territory and stressed that it could take measures to protect the area.

A foreign ministry spokesman "called on the Turkish government to withdraw its troops immediately from Iraq's territory, and to refrain from such actions that contradict the most basic principles of good neighbourly relations and international law."

"Iraq reserves the right to take measures aimed at protecting its territory and national sovereignty," the spokesman said, according to the official INA news agency.

Turkey's Anatolia news agency said Friday that warplanes raided positions of separatist Turkish Kurds in northern Iraq and a ground operation was also being launched in Iraqi territory.

The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which maintains bases in northern Iraq, are fighting for a Kur-

dish homeland in southeast Turkey.

"The Iraqi foreign ministry spokesman said: 'It is normal that the instability existing in northern Iraq would have repercussions on the neighbouring Turkish regions.'"

"But it is neither normal nor logical for the Turkish government to ignore the main reason behind the instability, namely the military interference of the United States and Britain and their intelligence services," the spokesman said.

"It is also abnormal for the Turkish government to facilitate this interference by renewing the presence of the forces of the U.S. and Britain," he added.

The Turkish parliament Thursday renewed the mandate for the U.S.-British operation Northern Watch, tasked with enforcing a no-fly zone over a northern Iraqi region controlled by Iraqi-Kurdish groups in defiance of Baghdad.

## Turkish forces kill 18 Kurdish rebels

DIYARBAKIR (AFP) — Turkish security forces have killed 18 separatist Kurdish rebels in fighting in the country's troubled southeast over the past two days, officials said Saturday.

Army troops, who on Friday launched a large-scale campaign in Gabor mountains near the Iraqi border, killed 16 members of the outlawed Kurdistan Labour Party (PKK) in two days of clashes, a regional security official told AFP in this southeastern city.

In a related development,

special police units raiding a home here shot to death two other Kurdish rebels inside, the official said.

The two PKK members were killed and a policeman was injured during a brief shootout in a central district.

Despite frequent clashes between PKK rebels and security forces in mountainous areas in the southeast, this was the first such incident in the centre of Diyarbakir, a city of one million people, in recent months.

## 27 villagers killed in Algeria's Tiaret region

ALGIERS (AFP) — Twenty-seven people were killed overnight in a village in the Tiaret region, 200 kilometres southwest of the capital, independent newspapers reported on Saturday.

The victims, members of three families, had their throats cut and were mutilated in the remote hamlet of Zouabria.

In the same region, up to 120 people were killed in two massacres in the villages of Sidi Landri and M'ghila on Tuesday night, privately-owned newspapers reported Thursday. Security forces put the official toll at 48.

Among the victims in the latest atrocity was a 21-day-old baby boy found with his throat cut on his mother's lap. The mother had herself been

mutilated with an axe.

Papers also reported that three members of the auto-defence groups set up to allow villagers to protect themselves were killed Thursday afternoon when a bomb exploded at Sidi Ali, near Larba, southeast Algeria.

The men had been inspecting a school when a bomb placed in the head teacher's office exploded.

Following recent massacres, local military commander General Kamel Abderrahmane offered villagers last Wednesday the choice of weapons or seeking safety in town.

Papers on Saturday also reported that security forces had renewed operations against Islamist fighters in

the run-up to Ramadan, the holy month when attacks traditionally increase.

The largest operation took place in the Bouzegza mountains near Algiers where dozens of extremists were killed, according to the daily newspaper L'Authentique.

Elsewhere security forces surrounded an armed group in the south-east of Algiers, while at Oran a bomb-making factory was found and destroyed, according to the newspaper.

Violence has been escalating since Wednesday, raising fears of a particularly bloody Ramadan ahead.

Ramadan, the lunar month of fasting that celebrates sacrifices and commemorates the battles of the prophet Muhammad, is considered by

many Islamists as propitious for "jihad" or holy war.

Between 92 and 131 people were slaughtered overnight Tuesday in attacks in Algiers and on two villages in Tiaret, according to press figures, although authorities gave the number killed as 59.

In addition three people were murdered Wednesday in three attacks at Bouzegza near Algiers, the press reported.

More than 120 were killed the previous week in other attacks.

Amnesty International estimates that more than 80,000 people have died in an armed Islamist rebellion since 1992, when the army blocked an election victory by the now-banned Islamic Salvation Front (GIA).

CAIRO (AFP) — The Sphinx is finally free of the scaffolding that caged the 4,600-year-old limestone monument during seven years of painstaking restoration work.

"The restoration work which started in 1990 ended on Dec. 12 and two days ago the scaffolding came down," Ahmad Al Haggag, director of antiquities for the Pyramids region on the outskirts of Cairo, said on Saturday.

## Sphinx free from scaffolding after seven years

day. "One hundred thousand stones were used between 1990 and 1997 to restore the Sphinx," Mr. Haggag said, adding that experts left the damaged face of the half-lion colossus untouched.

A star-studded ceremony is planned for early 1998 to celebrate the end of the restoration work ahead of the statue's 4,600th birthday in March, he said.

Known in Arabic as Abu Al Hol (The Father of Terror), Egypt's most famous monument along with the three Pyramids of Giza which it guards was cut in limestone and stands 20 meters tall and 57 meters long.

Restoration of the Sphinx, which has suffered from erosion and damage through underground water, was carried out by Egyptian experts in line with recommendations by the California-based Paul Getty Institute.

The Sphinx, erected during the fourth dynasty from 2620-2500 B.C., represents King Khephren and originally wore a royal head-dress bearing a cobra and a false beard, a sign of divinity among the pharaohs and gods.

Two legends have grown up around the disappearance of the features. According to one, Napoleon Bonaparte ordered his army to bombard the imposing statue which he regarded as a challenge to his

night during a French expedition to Egypt from 1798 to 1801.

Bonaparte succeeded in destroying the nose and beard, and legend has it his subsequent downfall was due to the curse of the Sphinx.

The other story claims that a Muslim in the Fatimid era of 969-1071 believed the Sphinx represented a pagan cult denounced by Islam and attacked the nose and beard with an axe.

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### JORDAN TELEVISION

TEL 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:10 .....The Pink Panther  
14:30 .....Jonny Quest  
15:00 .....Energy Express  
15:30 .....American Chart Show  
16:30 .....Tarzan  
17:00 .....French Programmes  
19:00 .....News in French  
19:30 .....News Headlines  
19:35 .....Kaie and Allie  
20:00 .....Cinema Cinema  
20:30 .....D.C. - Renegade  
21:10 .....Renegade  
22:00 .....News in English  
22:30 .....North and South  
23:15 .....The Jewel in the Crown

### PRAYER TIMES

05:07 .....Fajr  
06:30 .....(Sunrise) Dhuhr  
11:37 .....Dhuhr  
14:21 .....Asr  
16:44 .....Maghreb  
18:07 .....Isha

### CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church  
Sweifeh, Tel. 810740  
Assemblies of God Church Tel.  
632785  
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590  
Church of the Annunciation  
Tel. 637440.

## JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.  
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366  
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.  
Armenian Catholic Church Tel.  
771331.  
Armenian Orthodox Church  
Tel. 775261.  
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.  
Amman International Church  
Tel. 865897.  
Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Tel. 824328.  
German-speaking Evangelical  
Congregation Tel. 688404.  
The Latter-Day Saints Tel.  
654932.  
Church of Nazarene Tel.  
675691.  
The Evangelical Local Church  
in Amman Tel. 811295  
English-speaking  
Latin Catholics Parish Tel.  
614190.

### WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology  
Skies will be partly cloudy with a chance of scattered showers in the early hours of the morning. Winds will be southeasterly moderate. In Aqaba skies will be partly cloudy, winds will be southeasterly moder-

ate and seas calm.  
Min./Max. temp.  
Amman .....6/14  
Aqaba .....12/22  
Deserts .....4/16  
Jordan Valley .....12/22

Yesterday's high temperatures:  
Amman 13, Aqaba 22 Humidity  
readings: Amman 55 per cent.  
Aqaba 38 per cent.

### USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY  
AMMAN:  
Dr. Khalid M'addi .....661144  
Dr. Bassam Karadshah .....759200  
Dr. Salim Daboul .....776751  
Dr. Ramzi Mazzawi .....894788  
Firas pharmacy .....661912  
Ferdows pharmacy .....778336  
Al Asema pharmacy .....637055  
Naitoukh pharmacy .....623672  
Al Salam pharmacy .....636731  
Yacoub pharmacy .....649445  
Shmeisani pharmacy .....637660  
Najib pharmacy .....847632  
IRBID:  
Dr. Fawzi Abdul Hatja .....352970  
Al Quds pharmacy .....1-1  
ZARQA:

Dr. Isma'il Tallawi .....903469  
Khalifeh pharmacy .....98541

### EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre .....637111  
Civil Defence Department .....661111  
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue .....630341  
Civil Defence Emergency .....199  
Rescue Police .....192 621111, 637777  
Fire Brigade .....617101  
Blood Bank .....775121  
Highway Police .....843402  
Traffic Police .....896390  
Public Security Dept. ....630521  
Hotel Complaints .....845800  
Price Complaints .....661176  
Water & Sewerage Complaints .....897467  
Amman Municipality Complaints .....787111  
Telephone Information (directory assistance) .....121  
Overseas Calls .....010231  
Central Amman Telephone  
Repairs .....623101  
Abdali Tel. Repairs .....661101  
Jordan Television .....773111  
Radio Jordan .....774111  
Water Authority .....680100  
J. Electricity Authority .....815615  
Electric Power Co. ....636381  
RJ Flight Information .....08-53200  
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

### HOSPITALS

AMMAN:  
Hussein Medical Centre .....813813/332  
Khalid Manerity .....644281/6  
Akilieh Maternity .....642441/2  
Jabal Amman Maternity .....642362  
Malhas, J. Amman .....636140  
Palestine, Shmeisani .....607071  
Shmeisani Hospital .....649131  
University Hospital .....845845  
Al-Muasher Hospital .....667227/9  
The Islamic, Abdali .....666126/37  
Al-Ahli, Abdali .....664164/6  
Italian, Al-Muhajreen .....777111/3  
Al-Bashir .....775111/26  
Army, Marka .....891611/15  
Queen Alia Hospital .....682240/50  
Anial Hospital .....674155  
The Arab Centre for Health and Special Surgery .....865199  
ZARQA:  
Zarqa Govt. Hospital .....109083323  
Zarqa National Hospital .....109083323  
Ibn Sina Hospital .....109086732  
Al Hikma Modern Hospital .....109086732  
IRBID:  
Princess Basma Hospital .....1021275555  
Greek Catholic Hospital .....1021272275  
Ibn Al Nafies Hospital .....1021247100

AQABA:  
Princess Haya Hospital  
1031314111

### FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT  
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44) 532005, when it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone (44) (52700).

### ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights:  
08:05 .....Lanica (RJ)  
08:25 .....Bombay (RJ)  
08:35 .....Jeddah (RJ)  
09:15 .....Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)  
09:30 .....Osaka-Bangkok (RJ)  
09:45 .....Osaka-Bangkok-Dubai (RJ)  
09:50 .....Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)  
10:40 .....Beirut (RJ)  
16:00 .....Madrid (RJ)  
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)  
17:00 .....Brussels (RJ)  
17:05 .....Paris (RJ)  
17:45 .....London (RJ)  
18:05 .....Athens (RJ)

19:10 .....Rome (RJ)  
19:40 .....Rome (RJ)  
21:40 .....Frankfurt, Milan (RJ)  
22:50 .....Vienna, Aqaba (RJ)  
24:05 .....Cairo (RJ)  
02:00 .....Jeddah (RJ)

### Other Flights

03:25 .....Rome (AZ)  
04:00 .....Sana'a (Y)  
11:00 .....Riyadh (SV)  
12:25 .....Bahrain (GF)  
13:00 .....Moscow (SU)  
15:00 .....Doha (QR)  
17:45 .....Jeddah (SV)  
20:00 .....Tel Aviv (LY)  
20:10 .....Beirut (ME)  
20:40 .....Cairo (MS)  
23:10 .....Isanbul (TK)

### DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights:  
07:00 .....Beirut (RJ)  
10:30 .....Frankfurt (RJ)

10:50 .....Aqaba, Vienna (RJ)  
11:40 .....Rome (RJ)  
11:15 .....Rome (RJ)  
11:50 .....Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)  
12:15 .....London (RJ)  
12:20 .....Athens (RJ)  
12:30 .....Amsterdam, New York (RJ)  
20:10 .....Cairo (RJ)  
20:15 .....New Delhi (RJ)  
20:50 .....Jeddah (RJ)  
21:00 .....Jeddah (RJ)  
21:00 .....Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)  
22:30 .....Bangkok (RJ)  
22:45 .....Sana'a (RJ)  
23:00 Abu Dhabi, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)  
23:00 .....Jakarta (RJ)  
00:15 .....Damascus (RJ)

### Other Flights

03:00 .....Athens (OA)  
04:20 .....Rome (AZ)  
06:15 .....Beirut (ME)  
06:40 .....Beirut, London (BA)  
07:50 .....London (BA)  
11:00 .....Sana'a (Y)  
13:15 .....Doha (QR)  
14:50 .....Moscow (SU)  
16:00 .....Doha (QR)  
19:15 .....Jeddah (SV)  
21:20 .....Tel Aviv (LY)  
21:40 .....Cairo (MS)

Royal Wings (RW)  
06:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)  
08:15 .....Aqaba (RW)  
09:30 .....Amman (QAIA) (RW)  
16:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)  
17:55 .....Tel Aviv (LY)  
20:30 .....Amman (QAIA) (RW)  
21:50 .....Aqaba (RW)





**PRINCESS MEETS CHILDREN:** Her Royal Highness Princess Rania Saturday meets at the Royal Court with a number of children from the Hamzeh Ben Al Hussein School. The children offered Princess Rania the shield of the Circassian Society for Women on the occasion of His Majesty King Hussein's 62nd birthday. Also attending the meeting were the school's headmistress, Nihad Nagouj, and its teaching staff (Petra photo)

## Lower House to continue debate on draft customs law

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Lower House of Parliament today will resume its discussion of the draft customs law that was referred to it by the government.

Discussion started last Wednesday, when the deputies endorsed 50 articles of the draft law that had been debated by the previous 12th Parliament.

A total of 137 articles out of the law's 258 have so far been endorsed, according to Parliament sources.

Meanwhile, sources said the government will in due course refer draft laws on political parties, professional associations, and press and publications to the House.

The concerned ministerial committees next week will begin examination of these drafts before they can be referred to Parliament, the sources stated.

There is a difference of opinion among the Cabinet members over the draft elections law, which was drawn up by the Ministry of Interior, according to the sources.

While Minister of Interior Nahir Rashid supports the idea of cancelling the quota system, which grants a specific number of seats in Parliament to Christians and Circassians, other ministers insist on keeping it, the sources said. Both sides, however, reject the idea of a quota for

women, they added.

In addition to cancelling the quota system, Mr. Rashid suggested dividing Jordan into 80 electoral districts and lowering the voting age from 19 to 18.

As for the draft law on political parties, the sources said the Ministry of Interior suggested that the required number of initial members be at least 500 rather than 50 at present. Other provisions of the proposed law include authorising the Ministry of Interior to freeze any political party should disputes appear among its leaders and requiring that each party win at least one seat in Parliament after every one or two elections.

## RJ opens annual marketing and sales conference today

AMMAN (Petra) — Royal Jordanian (RJ), the national air carrier, today will hold its annual marketing and sales conference in Amman for RJ offices in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf regions.

RJ Vice President for Commercial Affairs Majdi Sabri said the meeting, which will be opened by President and CEO Nader Dabab, will evaluate the performance of the offices in these three regions, their marketing plans for 1998, and ways for dealing with the current competition in the air transport industry.

Noting that RJ has been

holding regional conferences for similar purposes, Dr. Sabri said in the past week an RJ meeting was held in Bangkok to assess marketing and sales in the southeast Asia and Indian subcontinent regions.

Dr. Sabri, who chaired the regional meetings elsewhere, said the RJ regional office managers in Bangkok focused on means of coping with the financial and economic crisis that swept the countries in southeast Asia and the ensuing devaluation of local currencies and decline in air transport operations.

The recent economic

crises in these nations led to a downsizing of tourism operations and a drop in the number of tourists visiting the Jordanian region for religious purposes, such as visiting Jerusalem and the burial sites of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad and performing the pilgrimage to Mecca, he said.

At the Bangkok meeting, RJ offices were instructed on means of increasing ticket sales to increase revenues and reducing the negative effects resulting from the devaluation of local currencies, according to Dr. Sabri.

## Jordan, Iraq open talks on Kingdom's 1998 oil supplies, joint projects

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan and Iraq Saturday opened talks in Baghdad on the Kingdom's crude oil and oil product supplies for 1998 as well as joint oil-related projects and the creation of a joint oil company.

After the first round of negotiations, Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Mohammad Saleh Hourani, the head of the Jordanian team to the talks, said under the 1997 oil protocol, Iraq supplied 4.2 million tonnes of crude

oil and oil products to Jordan, a nearly seven per cent increase over the 1996 figure.

Dr. Hourani said Jordan is seeking to increase 1998 oil imports from Iraq by at least seven per cent over the 1997 figures.

More than 3,000 oil tanker trucks transport the crude oil and oil products from Iraq to Jordan at the rate of 400 trucks a day, he said, adding that the total transport costs amounted to \$50 million.

According to Dr. Hourani, the two sides plan to discuss a number of oil-related projects under the present oil protocol, including creating an oil services company, engaging Iraqi experts to help develop the Jordanian Al Rishah oil fields, laying a pipeline to carry oil from Iraq to Jordan, and establishing a refinery at Aqaba.

The head of the Iraqi delegation, Oil Minister Amer Mohammad Rashid, said Iraq will continue to supply Jordan with all its crude oil

and oil products needs and is ready to carry out joint oil-related plans and establish a joint oil company with the Kingdom.

Iraq will grant priority to oil companies from friendly nations to conclude contracts in accordance with the food-for-oil scheme, according to the Iraqi minister.

Jordan currently imports between 75,000 and 80,000 barrels of crude oil per day from Iraq, under the terms of a 1997 protocol.

Last year, Iraq agreed to give Jordan \$300 million in free oil supplies and sell the rest at below-market rates in repayment of an old debt.

The U.N. has allowed Jordan to continue receiving oil supplies from Iraq because Amman has no other sources of supply at concessionary terms. Jordan supplied Iraq with U.N.-authorised goods and services worth \$225 million under the 1997 protocol but is hoping to increase the volume of exports next year.

## Delegation formed for Arab interior ministers meeting

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan will take part in a meeting of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers in Tunis on Jan. 4 to discuss cooperation among Arab states in security-related issues, according to an announcement Saturday.

Minister of Interior Nahir Rashid will lead Jordan's delegation to the meeting and will deliver an address reflecting the country's concept of comprehensive security. The speech will cover regional and international cooperation in security-related affairs, including matters of fighting crime and various forms of extremism.

Mr. Rashid will be accompanied by a delegation representing the Ministry of Interior, including Secretary General Hashem Sabbagh, and the Public Security Department.

During the regular session, the Cabinet decided to form a steering committee to supervise the preparations for the 1999 Arab Games, which Jordan will host. The committee will be chaired by Deputy Prime Minister for Development Affairs and Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs Jawad Anani.

The Cabinet approved Jordan's participation in a tourism fair to be held in Geneva on May 12 and another meeting by travel and tourist agents in the U.S. to be held in Los Angeles next October.

The Cabinet decided to exempt public share holding companies that deal with exports from income tax and social services taxes.

## 19-year-old acquitted of murder charges after 15 months in jail

By Rana Hussein  
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A 19-year-old Jordanian held 15 months in jail walked out of court a free man Saturday after being acquitted of charges of premeditated murder.

The court tribunal cited lack of evidence in the case of Mithqal Atham, who was tried for the premeditated murder of Private Ali Mahmoud, 23, in the Mafraq Army Division in June 27, 1996. The charge could have carried the death penalty.

The defendant also faced

charges of using forged documents and carrying an illegal weapon.

The court, headed by Judge Abdul Hamid Sa'ad and including Judges Yassin Abdullat and Ahmad Khatib, said the prosecution failed to provide solid evidence to indict the defendant.

"We cannot convict a person based on suspicions," said the tribunal.

The court also said the prosecution witness had failed to "positively identify" the defendant as the person they saw on the eve of the crime.

Court-appointed defence

lawyer Mohammad Zuhair Kayed, in an interview with the Jordan Times, hailed the court ruling as "an excellent verdict."

He expressed dismay over the long period of time his client had to spend in jail and the court's refusal to free him on bail.

"The law does not give my client the right to ask for compensation for the time he has wasted in prison," he said.

According to court documents, the victim's colleagues found Mahmoud stabbed to death during guard duty at his army unit in Mafraq. They later told

interrogators that they saw a man wearing a shirt bearing the letter "M" flee the scene.

The court said police seized the defendant three months later after finding a document that belonged to the victim in his possession. Police also found a shirt with the letter "M" on it.

But in court, the defendant, who claimed that he was subjected to torture by the authorities, denied being the killer.

He said he found the victim's document in the street and handed it over to the army division.

## NCP suspends member for allegedly attacking party on Israeli television

By Lola M. Keilani  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A leading local party that supports Jordan's 1994 peace treaty with Israel has frozen the membership of journalist Tayseer Faris after he used the Jewish state's television to attack the party's policies.

Mr. Faris, spokesperson for the pro-establishment National Consultative Party (NCP), said the decision was taken after Mr. Faris "carried out political activities in Israel without consulting the party."

However, political activists said the decision, which contradicted the party's pro-peace charter, was made to fend off growing criticism by Jordan's vocal opposition of plans by Mr. Faris to set up a pro-Israel newspaper.

The Islamist-led opposition is seeking to block all forms of normalisation with

Israel to weaken the controversial treaty, which has divided many Jordanians.

Mr. Kheir told the Jordan Times that Mr. Faris made the visit without getting party approval and used Israeli television to attack the party's policies.

"He was extremely critical of the party for not supporting his bid to establish the pro-Israel newspaper in Jordan," Mr. Kheir added.

Mr. Faris' bid to set up the newspaper with funding from Israeli investors drew a barrage of criticism from opposition parties as well as independent leaders, including former deputies Leith Shbeilat and Toujan Faisal.

Ali Farid Saad, president of the NCP central council, said the 360-strong body will meet soon to discuss the possibility of expelling Mr. Faris from the NCP, a coalition of nine centrist political groups that is represented in the 80-seat Parliament by two deputies.

"The issue is that he violated the party's by-laws by visiting a foreign country [Israel] without authorisation from the NCP and issuing political declarations without being delegated to do so," Mr. Saad told the Jordan Times.

Mr. Faris recently decided to quit his job at the NCP's mouthpiece Al Nahda newspaper. He was not immediately available for comment.

Sources close to the party said the NCP was apparently forced to act against Mr. Faris due to mounting pressure by the opposition to thwart the pro-Israel newspaper.

"It was a well-known fact within the party that Mr. Faris was preparing to launch this newspaper months earlier," said one source. "But it was Mr. Shbeilat and Ms. Faisal who put focus on this issue during a meeting of opposition groups held at the Professional Associations Com-

plex," added the source.

"The whole thing is intended to resist the pressure of opposition groups, which raised the issue of NCP relations with Israel," he said. "It was an immediate reaction, which the party felt it had to make to neutralise the barrage of attacks against it."

The issue of popular contacts with Israel has been a sensitive one for many Jordanians who, despite the treaty, still view the Jewish state as an enemy because of decades of war and rivalry.

A private visit by Deputies Hamadeh Faraaneh and Mohammad Raafat to Israel last week generated a barrage of criticism from their constituents, local dailies, and Parliament.

The two said their four-day visit, during which they met with the Knesset (parliament) speaker and others, was in response to an invitation by an Arab-Israeli deputy.

## Refugee camp residents hold rally protesting deputies' visit to Israel

By Tareq Ayyoub  
Special to the Jordan Times

BAQA'A CAMP — At least 1,000 participants, mostly Islamists, Friday took part in a rally in the Baqa'a refugee camp to protest the visit of two deputies to Israel nine days ago.

Protesters also held two separate sit-ins in Al Hashimi and Al Hussein refugee camps.

During the peaceful procession, protesters marched through different parts of the camp, home to 120,000 refugees, carrying Palestinian flags and banners denouncing the visit and urging Parliament to punish the MPs.

The visit of Mohammad Ra'afat and Hamadah Faraaneh to Jerusalem drew a wide range of criticism among Jordanians and especially from those who voted for the two.

Mr. Ra'afat, an Islamic cleric turned politician, won the Baqa'a seat in the Nov. 4 elections, while his colleague was elected in the Amman Second district.

During their visit, the first by Jordanian lawmakers since the 1994 peace treaty, the two MPs met with the speaker of the Israeli Knesset (parliament). Dan

Tichon, and other MKs.

Many Jordanian deputies have also demanded the dismissal of their colleagues from the 120-member Lower House.

At the rally, former Parliament member Mohammad Oweidah told reporters that the protest was held to express the "will of the people who reject the peace with Israel."

"The two lawmakers do not represent our people," he said. "The visit has offered Israel popular [Jordanian] support for the claims of the Jews."

"Israel managed to make peace with Arab governments but failed to do the same with Arab peoples," said Dr. Oweidah, who represented the camp in the 12th Parliament.

Said Diab, secretary general of the Popular Democratic Party, told the participants that the visit was a "shock and catastrophe" to the Jordanian and Palestinian peoples.

During Friday prayers, several Muslim preachers criticised the visit and said it was a mistake to vote for Mr. Ra'afat. They also lashed out at the Jews and criticised the peace treaty with Israel.

Security agents surrounded Mr. Ra'afat's house to



More than one thousand Palestinian refugees rally in Al Baqa'a camp Friday to protest deputy Mohammad Ra'afat's visit to the Israeli Knesset nine days ago. The angry crowd carried banners reading "Baqa'a camp residents denounce the visit to the Israeli Knesset" (Photo by Yousef Allan)

prevent any possible attacks by people opposed to his visit.

Camp leaders also said they were busy preparing a petition with "thousands of signatures of camp residents" calling for the dismissal of the two lawmakers.

They added that they

plan to submit it to Speaker of the Lower House Sa'ad Hayel Srour.

In Al Hussein refugee camp, police agents surrounded Abu Hanifah Al Nouman mosque to prevent worshippers from holding a rally in the camp.

Former Islamic Action

Front deputy Abdul Aziz Jaber criticised the visit and said it was not in conformity with Islam's teachings.

Meanwhile, supporters of the two MPs were scheduled to hold a rally Saturday evening in Amman as a "muscle show" of allegiance to the two lawmakers.

## WHAT'S GOING ON

### EXHIBITIONS

\* Display of Bani Hamida handicrafts (rugs, cushions, and wall hangings) at Bani Hamida House, Jabal Amman (Tel. 658696/7), until Jan. 5.

\* "Modern Bulgarian Art" at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until Jan. 5.

\* Works by about a hundred artists from Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Lebanon, and Jordan at Hammurabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street, until Feb. 20 (Tel. 5536098).

\* Exhibition of prints by Algerian artist Rashid Koraisi and calligraphy by Iraqi artist Hassan Massoudi, inspired by the poems of Mahmoud Darwish, at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until Dec. 31. Also displaying paintings by Jordanian artist Nasr Abdul Aziz, and works by contemporary Arab artists.

## News In Brief

### VTC, women's forum sign agreement

AMMAN (Petra) — An agreement was signed at the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) Saturday between the corporation and the Jordanian National Forum for Women (JNFV). The agreement aims at bolstering cooperation between the two parties and at exchanging expertise. The agreement was signed by VTC Director General Ali Nasrallah and the JNFV Secretary General May Abul Samn.

### Minister inspects schools

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Education and Higher Education Munther Masri Saturday paid an inspection tour to some schools in the Amman

governorate. Dr. Masri's tour included visits to Abu Firas Hamadani and Tia' Al Ali schools, where he was briefed by Deputy Assaf Assaf on the conditions of both schools, which were established in 1958.

### Yoghurt factory opens

MA'AN (Petra) — Jordan Cooperative Corporation (JCC) Director General Khaled Tayyeb Saturday opened the Qurian Cooperative Society's yoghurt factory, which was established with assistance from the World Food Programme and JCC. Mr. Tayyeb addressed the audience and emphasised the factory will be operated by Jordanian men and women to produce cheese, dried yoghurt and yoghurt, and other dairy products.

### Correction

The caption accompanying the Christmas/Ramadan picture on page three of the Dec. 25-26 (Thursday-Friday) edition was incorrect. The scene was from the New English School and not the Modern English School, as was reported. The Jordan Times regrets any inconveniences caused by this error.



## Japan's main opposition party breaks up ahead of poll

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's main opposition party broke up Saturday after one of its core factions said it would contest upper house elections next July on its own.

In a major shift of the country's political alignment, the New Frontier Party (NFP), the second biggest force in parliament, approved its dissolution at a meeting of its deputies from both houses of parliament, ending a tumultuous three-year history.

"We have decided to move on different paths as separate parties," NFP leader Ichiro Ozawa declared at the start of the meeting. He was reelected only last week to another two-year term as the party's president.

"We will keep on doing our utmost to deliver on our manifesto to rebuild Japan," said the 55-year-old Ozawa, a reputed back-room power broker known for his advocacy of strong national defence and other tough lines.

The decision was seen as a gamble by Mr. Ozawa to form a new conservative

party in a long-shot bid to regain power while Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto's leadership is in tatters over Japan's economic and financial turmoil.

The NFP split resulted from a plan by its major faction, the former Buddhist-backed centrist party Komeito, to campaign on its own in the seat-at-large poll.

Komeito-linked politicians have been traditionally supported by Japan's biggest religious organisation, Soka Gakkai.

Mr. Ozawa reportedly plans to form a new party with some 100 deputies from both houses of parliament. But his power base is expected to remain unstable without the help of Soka Gakkai's organised vote.

"We cannot afford to wait until the new year (to set up a new party)," Mr. Ozawa told reporters. "It is desirable for each of us to spend the new year in a clear-cut form."

"The opposition force must become a party which can take over the place of

the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and that will be the direction we want to go," Michihiko Kano, a former director general of the management and coordination agency who was defeated by Mr. Ozawa in last week's NFP leadership ballot, said.

Mr. Ozawa's move may herald the birth of another new party formed by supporters of Mr. Kano.

There is also a move among stalwarts of Mr. Hashimoto's conservative LDP to join forces with Mr. Ozawa, a former LDP secretary general said.

"If the new party can agree with us on policies and ideals, we will seek partial cooperation from them in handling bills in parliament," said Yasuhiro Nakasone, a former premier and one of the LDP's headline elders.

"You may call it a practical alliance," he said on television.

Mr. Ozawa bolted the scandal-hit LDP in 1993 to end the party's 38-year single-party rule. He helped set up a wide alliance which ruled Japan for a

year until the LDP returned to power in mid-1994 with the help of the Social Democratic Party and the centrist party Sakigake.

Mr. Ozawa formed the NFP in December 1994 with key members of the anti-LDP alliance.

The NFP had 126 seats against the LDP's 252 in the 500-seat House of Representatives, the lower house of parliament. Its strength in the 252-seat House of Councillors was 56 against the LDP's 117.

There were 19 upper-house deputies linked to the Komeito faction.

Under Mr. Ozawa's two-year leadership, the party lost more than 40 members through defections, including former prime ministers Morihiro Hosokawa and Tsutomu Hata.

The party's seats in the powerful lower house dropped from 160 to 156 in the October 1996 election, and have since shrunk to 126.

Many of the defectors joined the LDP, helping the ruling party to capture a majority earlier this year in the lower house.



Ichiro Ozawa, leader of Japan's main opposition New Frontier Party, announces the dissolution of the party in Tokyo (Reuters photo)

## Dissident complains of police harassment following labour appeal

BEIJING (AP) — A dissident who recently issued a nationwide appeal for independent labour unions says police have cut his phone line and stepped up surveillance in violation of his human rights.

Veteran activist Qin Yongmin sent a letter to the United Nations Human Rights Commission protesting the increased harassment by police in his central Chinese hometown of Wuhan, the Information Centre of Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China said Saturday.

China has a single nationwide trade union, controlled by the government, and no independent labour organisations are allowed. Mr. Qin is among many activists who are urging the tens of millions of workers left unemployed by defunct state-run factories to organise.

The calls for better human rights protection have been galvanised in part by China's decision to ratify a 20-year-old U.N. Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights ahead of President Jiang Zemin's U.S. state visit, which took place in late October.

After Mr. Qin publicised his appeal earlier this week through the international media and overseas human rights groups, his mail was seized and his phone line cut, according to a copy of his letter provided by the Hong Kong-based human rights group.

Mr. Qin complained of increased police surveillance and said his neighbours had been coerced into spying on him.

In addition to his call to workers to organise, Mr. Qin sent a letter to Chinese President Jiang Zemin earlier this month urging the government to show good faith by allowing protests by laid-off workers and drafting stronger civil liberties laws.

Hundreds of protests have broken out across China as the pace of layoffs increased this year.

The state-run media rarely reports such news and information is sketchy, but police appear to have tolerated many of the disturbances, although some resulted in arrests and other official retaliation.

Asked about such protests while visiting Canada, Mr. Jiang said China's constitution allows freedom of assembly, speech and demonstration, but he said those rights did not give license to "create chaos."

Mr. Qin spent eight years in prison in the 1980s for pro-democracy activities. Re-arrested in 1993 for his role in the "peace charter" movement, he spent two years in a labour camp.

In a separate appeal to Mr. Jiang sent Saturday, former autoworker Leng Wanbao urged that the authorities desist from charging workers who engage in protests with "counterrevolutionary crimes."

"The state enterprise reforms are bound to result in many layoffs. The unemployed should be allowed to organise independently to sort out their problems," he said in a copy of the letter also supplied by the Information Centre of Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China.

Mr. Leng, who was released from prison in 1994 on medical parole, praised the government's decision in May to overturn a conviction against him and three other dissidents. The four had been sentenced to prison terms ranging from two to 20 years for organising an anti-government group in their hometown of Changchun, in northeastern Jilin province, during 1989 pro-democracy protests.

But he said the decision implied that others still imprisoned for their activities during the 1989 demonstrations should also be freed.

## Black box found from downed Singapore jetliner

SINGAPORE (AFP) — Investigators in Indonesia have found one of two black boxes from the Singaporean SilkAir jet that crashed killing all 104 people on board, the Television Corp. of Singapore (TCS) reported Saturday.

The announcement on the discovery of the black box flight data recorder was made at a joint media conference by Indonesian Minister of Transport Haryanto Dhanutirto and Singapore Communications Minister Mah Bow Tan in Palembang, the South Sumatra provincial capital, TCS said.

Mr. Mah described the finding as a major breakthrough, the report said.

The SilkAir Boeing 737-300 crashed into the Musi River in South Sumatra on Dec. 19, killing all 97 passengers and seven crew members on board. There were two black boxes located in the tail section of the 10-month-old plane — the cockpit voice recorder for recording radio transmissions and sounds in the cockpit and the flight data recorder to monitor various flight parameters such as altitude, speed and direction, officials had said earlier.

Some 700 Indonesians and 300 Singaporeans have been engaged in the search and recovery operations.

The black box voice and data recorders could hold vital clues to the crash.

Search was going on for the cockpit voice recorder, the second of the black boxes, the TCS report said. Investigators have been unwilling to speculate on a cause but some witnesses have reported hearing explosions before the plane plummeted from the sky.

The salvage operation has recovered fragments of the engine and other small plane parts from the river. Human remains have been dredged but not one intact body has been found at the crash site.

The 97 passengers on the ill-fated flight included 40 Singaporeans, 23 Indonesians, 10 Malaysians, five Americans, five French, four Germans, three British, two Japanese, one Australian, one Austrian, one Bosnian, one Indian and one Taiwanese.

The pilot was a Singaporean. The first officer was a New Zealander and the five strong cabin crew was from Singapore.

## Reporters group protests expulsion of ABN correspondent from Cambodia

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — An international press watchdog Saturday condemned the planned expulsion from Cambodia of a Western television correspondent as the government hinted the matter could be dropped with an apology.

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said the decision to expel veteran Canadian journalist Ed Fitzgerald of Asia Business News (ABN) for "systematic unfair reporting" ran against the government's promises to respect freedom of press and expression.

"This decision is in complete contradiction with the current words of the Cambodian authorities, which have affirmed a return to democratic practices and the restoration of freedoms," the Paris-based group said in an open letter to powerful Second Prime Minister Hun Sen.

"Reporters Without Borders asks you to use your influence so Ed Fitzgerald can continue to work in Cambodia," the group said, asking also for freedom of information to be respected.

Meanwhile Saturday, Secretary of State for Information Khieu Kanharith said Fitzgerald could escape the expulsion order, due to be signed by him Monday, if he

apologised for his reporting. "If he apologises, I won't sign any letter," he said, adding that the apology was needed to correct "mistakes" in his stories.

"If he tells me now that he will apologise, I will not sign the letter Monday but wait until the end of the week before considering whether to sign it."

Fitzgerald said he had still received no official notification of the expulsion order and declined to comment on whether he would accept the offer.

Friday, Khieu Kanharith said Fitzgerald, 50, the dean of the foreign press corps in Cambodia, would be asked to leave Cambodia as early as next week.

"We will not renew his visa and he will not be back again, even for the election," he said, referring to next July's scheduled polls. He said ABN would be allowed to replace Fitzgerald with another correspondent but that Fitzgerald would not be allowed back into Cambodia to work under any circumstances.

Khieu Kanharith said ABN's reporting on Cambodia had been "systematically" unfair for several months. He cited in particular a "Year in Review" story, reported by Fitzgerald, which

began airing on the network this week. Among other things, the story cast doubts on whether Cambodia's judicial system was independent, citing apparently selective and politically-motivated prosecutions, an allegation that Khieu Kanharith termed "untrue and unfair."

"There were many mistakes," he said, adding he had seen the 30-minute programme twice.

ABN was one of four news organisations criticised publicly last week by Hun Sen for giving Cambodia a bad reputation and scaring off much-needed investment in the aftermath of July's violent ouster of co-premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh. Hun Sen also named CNN, the New York Times and the Washington Post as offenders but only ABN has a correspondent based permanently in Cambodia.

Last week, the government warned both the national and international press it would take legal action against them if their reporting was deemed to be biased. The government also instructed them to use two official sources when reporting on any subject which could "affect national security or political stability." The two items are covered in Cambodia's press law.

## Windsor Castle reopens to public after 1992 blaze

WINDSOR, England (AFP) — Britain's Windsor Castle, restored to its full former glory after being ravaged by a blaze five years ago, reopened to the public Saturday.

More than 100 of the castle's 1,000 rooms were destroyed by fire on Nov. 20, 1992, the final blow to Queen Elizabeth's "annus horribilis" which saw the serial breakup of her children's marriages.

Nine of the state rooms were left unrecognisable by the blaze, which started in the former Chapel Royal when a light set too close to a curtain started the blaze during routine maintenance work.

It took 250 firemen working 15 hours and pumping more than 6.5 million litres of water to bring the fire under control.

The castle was unveiled to the queen in November, five months ahead of schedule and just in time for her golden wedding anniversary.

Of the nine halls destroyed during the fire, six were restored to their original design and three were redecorated.

The 55.5 metre St. George's banqueting hall has had a new hammer beam oak ceiling, prepared from 140 trees, to replace the destroyed Georgian ceiling.

Another feature of the restored castle, on which construction began in the ninth century, were the new stained glass windows in the tiny private chapel based on rough pencil drawings by Prince Philip.

The bottom right hand window is the only one not based on the prince's artwork. His drawing showed a phoenix rising from the ashes but the design finally chosen was of a fireman using a hose to douse the blazing castle.

The restoration cost 36.5 million pounds (\$62 million), 70 per cent of which was paid by the royal family, who opened Buckingham Palace to visitors during summer months with an entrance fee on Windsor Castle visits, and 30 per cent came from public work grants.

Windsor, west of London, is said to be the queen's favourite residence.

## Army loots newspaper premises in Kinshasa

KINSHASA (AFP) — Army officers completely ransacked the offices of Elima daily in Kinshasa after occupying the premises for over two months, the newspaper's directors said Saturday.

"Monday Dec. 22, the soldiers who were occupying the premises illegally sold the newspaper's cars, furniture and all the printing equipment. Wednesday they started tearing down doors and windows," newspaper chief executive Thy Rene Essolomwa said in a statement.

The military also looted the printshop in the same building, forcing 150 employees out of work.

Elima's owners have decided to "once again ask President Laurent-Désiré Kabila to quickly find a solution to this problem, which is a clear violation of the rights of property, of the press, and of man."

The military gave no reason for their action against the paper, the owners said.

## Erosion and pollution threaten China's water supply

BEIJING (AFP) — Soil erosion and "appalling" river pollution threaten China with a serious water shortage and catastrophic floods in the coming decades, a parliamentarian said Saturday in a speech marked by dire predictions that are unusual for a senior Chinese official.

"The chances are growing that China might suffer a possible severe water shortage in the first half of the 21st century, and the reality will be stark for our nation," said Wang Bingqian, vice chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC).

"China is estimated to possibly reach its extreme in the development of its water resource by the year 2030 when its population reaches 1.6 billion," said Mr. Wang, up from the present 1.26 billion people.

Mr. Wang said China is paradoxically threatened both by a shortage of potable water and flooding caused by soil erosion and pollution which he described as "appalling."

massive amounts of soil in riverbeds, causes catastrophic floods which have periodically hit China, especially in the Yellow River region.

In three provinces — Heilongjiang in the north-east, Henan in the centre and Hunan in the south — flood control projects "are inadequate and these projects will hardly be capable of resisting big floods," said Mr. Wang.

Erosion has affected 3.6 million square kilometres, or 38 per cent of Chinese territory, and the problem grows by 10,000 square kilometres each year, he said in the speech to a session of the NPC standing committee, which was carried by the official Xinhua news agency.

As for water pollution, Mr. Wang said "half of the waterways in China's seven water systems have been polluted to varying extent and one tenth of the water in these areas is no longer usable."

"The situation cannot be resolved in the near future," he warned.

## Vienna honours legendary Empress Elizabeth

VIENNA (AFP) — Austria's legendary Empress Elizabeth, affectionately known as Sissi, will once again be Vienna's star in 1998, as the city prepares to commemorate the 100th anniversary of her death with exhibitions and performances.

"This year's leitmotif is beauty, because Sissi has always been considered as one of the most beautiful women of her time," said Wolfgang Kraus, spokesman of the Viennese Tourism Office.

Emperor Francis Joseph at age 16. But her domestic life was unhappy and was marked by several tragedies, including the death of her only son, Rudolf.

She was killed by an Italian anarchist in Geneva in 1898.

"This event must allow visitors to move away from the clichés that surround Sissi, such as Romy Schneider's naïveté in the films on her life, or her image as a widow dressed in black," Susanne Walthers, director of an exhibition in the Hermesvilla Museum,

explained. Schneider played Sissi in three films on the empress's life.

The independent and unconventional empress will be remembered at the Hermesvilla Museum in an exhibition presenting her writings, her clothes, and personal possessions. "Elizabeth lived in her imaginary world. She was terrified of growing old and wanted to be remembered. She is now a myth," Ms. Walthers said.

An exhibition on the more public and official aspect of Sissi's life will be set up at the Hofburg

Imperial Palace, while her private life will be remembered at the Schonbrunn Castle in a Fritz Kreisler play, "Sissi."

Performances are scheduled July 10 to August 15. The castle's puppet will reveal "Sissi's secrets" in July, and multimedia performances are scheduled in the castle's gardens from June 10 to Sept. 10.

A tour of her favourite shops and sites in Vienna will be organised by the tourism office, which has set up an Internet site listing the various events.





## H. Kong tests show human-to-human transmission of bird flu difficult

HONG KONG (AFP) — Tests conducted on more than 500 people for Hong Kong's bird flu show little chance of transmission between people, an international expert said as two more suspected cases were found Saturday.

"We don't know whether this disease will stop, or spread. Initial research shows there is little chance of transmission from human to human," said Keiji Fukuda, from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Hong Kong authorities said Saturday two more suspected cases of "bird flu" or influenza A H5N1 were found in the territory. The Department of Health said a one-year-old boy

and a 72-year-old man were under treatment and in satisfactory condition.

This brings the total number of cases to 11 confirmed and 11 suspected.

The flu — previously known only to infect birds — in Hong Kong since May has raised fears of a possible international epidemic.

The first victim in May was a three-year-old boy who died. A total of three people are now known to have died from the H5N1 virus and a fourth death is suspected to have been caused by bird flu.

A government statement said results of the tests on 502 people, which found antibodies to the virus in nine people, suggested the

main mode of transmission was from bird-to-human.

"Analysis of the viral genes shows that they are avian in nature without evidence of reassortment with human influenza virus genes," it said.

The statement said the results left open the possibility of person-to-person transmission.

"However, the absence of antibodies among the family members of the ill child and the overall low number of antibody-positive people in contact with the child suggested that such transmission, if occurring, is relatively inefficient at this time," the statement said.

The infected cases include five poultry work-

ers, a student with exposure to poultry, a health care worker who took care of the child, a laboratory worker and one whose exposure was unclear.

Health authorities tested 502 people from an "exposed group" — poultry workers, people in contact with the three-year-old boy and those working with the virus such as laboratory workers.

Another 419 people in a comparison group who had no known contact with the child were all uninfected.

Mr. Fukuda told reporters the data showed "prolonged and intense exposure to poultry products" would bring a greater risk of infection. He said experts were studying

whether the virus could be transmitted from chickens to pigs and then to humans.

The government statement said the infection of the healthcare worker who looked after the child raised the possibility of human-to-human transmission.

It said the virus might be transmitted by exposure to infected poultry, direct exposure to the virus and exposure to someone who is ill and infectious.

Nervous residents, many suffering only from colds, have packed emergency

wards of six major government hospitals in recent days. China has temporarily halted exports of poultry to Hong Kong and the territory has launched a major

clean-up of chicken markets.

Deputy Agriculture Director K.K. Lui said China had agreed that all chickens exported to Hong Kong once the ban was lifted would have to be first quarantined for five days and then tested again by Hong Kong.

Agriculture Director Leslie Wei told reporters that tests at 70 Hong Kong chicken farms had so far detected no cases. Tests at local farms were expected to be completed early next week.

She said planned new controls would ban the import of all poultry from the mainland except those bearing a health certificate issued by authorities there.

## Pakistan to raise mass killing of Taleban at international level

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Pakistan will raise the issue of a massacre of Taliban prisoners in northern Afghanistan at an appropriate international level. Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan said Saturday.

Mr. Khan, who was answering a question by reporters about the reported mass murders, did not specify where and when Pakistan would do so.

Earlier this month the foreign ministry demanded the United Nations prosecute and punish Afghan warlord Abdul Malik, who has been blamed for the massacre. A spokesman had said Pakistan expected the U.N. to fulfil its responsibility to bring to justice those involved in the massacre.

Mr. Malik, now in exile in Iran, is alleged to have ordered the killing of up to 2,000 Taleban prisoners.

Reports here quoting Taleban radio said thousands of people staged a demonstration in the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad Friday over the killings.

In a resolution the rally urged the U.N. to put the perpetrators on trial, the reports said.

According to U.N. rapporteur Chong-Hyun Paik, who this month visited mass graves in a desert close to the town of Sheberghan, hundreds of Taleban prisoners were massacred.

A spokesman for the U.N. team led by the rapporteur said in Geneva that prisoners held by Mr. Malik were taken by truck to deep water wells.

The captives were thrown into the wells either alive, or if they resisted, shot first and then tossed in, spokesman John Mills said. Shots were fired and hand grenades exploded in the

wells before they were bulldozed over.

The U.N. Security Council on Dec. 16 expressed "deep concern" about the reports of mass killings of prisoners and civilians in Afghanistan.

It supported plans by U.N. chief Kofi Annan to fully investigate the reports.

Mr. Malik controlled the area in which the massacre took place from May to September, after ousting ally Abdul Rashid Dostam when he made a deal with the Taleban.

An ethnic Uzbek, Mr. Malik forced Mr. Dostam into exile but quickly turned against the Taleban, trapping thousands of hardline militia troops in his fiefdom.

Mr. Dostam returned after a second major Taleban assault on the north in September, forcing Mr. Malik to flee the country while accusing his rival of committing atrocities.

## Pakistan hopes talks will go on if India's BJP wins elections

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Pakistani Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan Saturday said he hoped India's Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) would continue bilateral peace talks if it comes to power next year.

"We hope the BJP will also enter into talks and hold meaningful dialogue on all issues including Kashmir," Mr. Khan told reporters.

India is due to go to the polls in February-March after a multi-party minority coalition government collapsed last month.

The right-wing BJP and Congress, India's two biggest parties, are seeking pre-poll alliances in the hope of leading a new coalition, but most analysts in India are predicting another hung parliament.

Pakistan and India resumed bilateral talks in March after a break of more than three years. After three sessions between their foreign secretaries the talks got

bogged down over differences related to Kashmir. Islamabad blamed India for backtracking on an agreement to set up a joint working committee for talks on Kashmir, a Himalayan region divided between the two countries and claimed by both which has triggered two of the three wars between them since their independence in 1947.

## Man dead after armed incident in Belfast prison

BELFAST (AFP) — A man was shot dead following an incident Saturday morning at the maximum security Maze prison outside Belfast which holds convicted loyalist and Republican terrorists, hospital sources said.

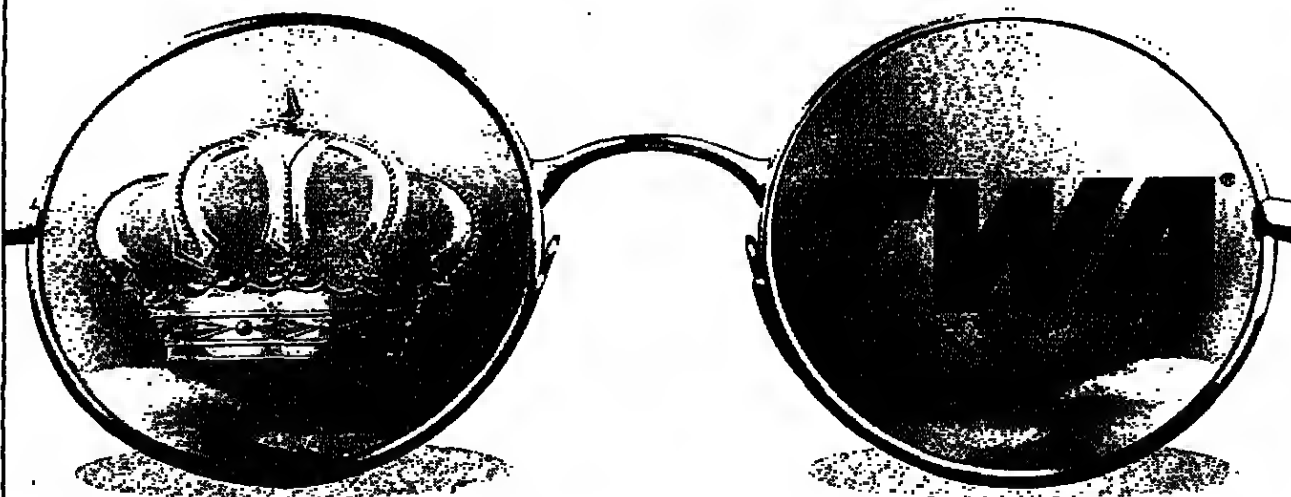
Four people were taken to hospital suffering from shock, said the same sources, without being able to confirm whether they were prisoners or prison staff.

Several prisoners climbed onto the roof of the prison, police said.

The Maze has some 500 inmates who are members of paramilitary groups, making it the largest detention centre for convicted terrorists in Western Europe.

Violent incidents sporadically break out at the prison, the last being an uprising by loyalist prisoners last April and May following a failed mass escape attempt by members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

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## Jordan Times

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### Offer to look at

A RECENT proposal by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to deploy U.N. peace-keeping forces in Palestinian territories which the Israeli government insists are vital for its security needs makes sense and deserves an open-minded response by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. As long as the basis for Israel's claim that it needs Palestinian areas along the Jordan Valley and the former Green Lines is security oriented, then there should be no excuse to turn down this Palestinian initiative. If, on the other hand, Israel uses the security factor as an excuse to usurp Arab lands, it would be only expected of the Israeli government to reject any such formula.

The outright refusal by Israel to even entertain the Palestinian offer reinforces Arafat's fear that it is bent on maintaining control over Arab territories under one pretext or another. Even without the deployment of a U.N. contingent, Israel has no basis to fear threatened from the east. Israel and Jordan have an effective peace treaty which should lay to rest any Israeli claim that the common border is not secure enough. Likewise any Palestinian state that may eventually emerge would never be strong enough militarily to pose any real danger to Israel, which would make sure of that anyway.

If and when a U.N. peace-keeping force is deployed, Israel would have its say on its composition. For instance, should the U.S. decide to join it, Israel would be assured of its real aims and effectiveness.

In any case, Israel should think in terms of security that is based on a permanent and just settlement of the entire Middle East conflict in all its dimensions. Netanyahu should realise by now that his country's long-term interest lies squarely in a comprehensive settlement with the Arabs that future generations can live with and honour. Keeping the occupation of Palestinian lands could only generate more hostility and animosity in this region of the world.

### ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

**Al Ra'i's** Fakhri Kwar Saturday urged the Arab countries to follow the example of Russia in sending a large shipment of food and medicines to Iraq by air. Kwar said he believed it was time that the Arab countries carry out such a mission in a show of solidarity with the Iraqi people who have been suffering from the crippling U.N. sanctions since 1990. That the Russians secured permission from the U.N. sanctions committee to send an aeroplane-load of relief supplies to the Iraqi people opens the door for the Arab countries to pursue a similar policy and obtain a series of permits that would allow them to fly in much needed relief supplies to the destitute people of Iraq, the writer continued. He said it is shameful to see the Russians carrying out a humanitarian mission while the Arab states, which are closer to Iraq, have failed to accomplish a similar humanitarian mission. Kwar said the Iraqis cannot survive on mere statements of sympathy or solidarity and condemnation of the sanctions and they require immediate and direct help to bring them relief.

**Al Arab Al Yawm's** Saleh Qallab said Israel will most certainly reject a proposal by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to replace Israeli forces in the occupied Arab lands with U.N. peace keeping troops. Mr. Arafat plans to carry this proposal to Washington next week although he realises Israel will reject it outright, said the writer. Of course Israel will reject this proposal because it has been maintaining that it wants to keep its troops deployed in the Arab territories to guarantee Israel's security. Qallab noted. The writer said the deployment of U.N. forces means that Israel can no longer cling to the excuse of wanting to ensure its security because the U.N. forces would be doing the job and policing the area. Even if President Clinton suggests that American troops can do the job, Netanyahu is sure to refuse the suggestion because Israel in fact wants to maintain its troops in the Arab areas to perpetuate its occupation of Arab lands. Added the writer. He said Israel does not believe in the principle of land for peace either does Netanyahu want to implement the Oslo accords which call for the Israeli withdrawal, hence no change in the present status quo.

### Sunday's Economic Pulse

## Strong JD curbed inflation rate

THE TWILIGHT of 1997 nears, and no surprises are expected. We can safely assert that the inflation rate in Jordan in 1997 measured by the cost of living index will be just below 3 per cent compared to 6.5 per cent in 1996. Once this figure is formally announced, some popular commentators will throw doubt on this figure being too low to be believed. Others may claim that the inflation rate could be as high as 7 to 10 per cent if not more!

Objections are expected to come from those who equate inflation with things being expensive. They note that the level of prices is high compared to old prices several years ago, or relative to their low purchasing power, or in view of what they desire these prices to be.

However, inflation is none of the above. It is the rise of the level of prices compared to what it was 12 months earlier. It measures the change in prices during a year. Prices may be considered extremely high according to a given consumer even if these prices had been exactly the same as last year in which case the inflation rate is zero.

The rather low inflation rates in 1997 should be under-

stood and believed attributable to several factors that suppressed them. Among these factors five are of particular interest! First there has been a considerable slow down in the economy; some people are even talking about a recession. Second, high unemployment, which keeps wages and consequently costs, low. Third, all restrictions against imports were removed which created competition and forced prices down. Fourth, customs duty on imports was reduced by another 10 percentage points. But the more important factor is that the Jordanian dinar, being pegged to the dollar at a fixed rate, strengthened by an average of 10 per cent vis-a-vis the European and Japanese currencies. Naturally, this brought down prices of imports which constitute some 50 per cent of the aggregate expenditure in the country.

In this respect the contradictory change of prices of pharmaceuticals in the market was raised. Recently prices of imported medicines, especially from Europe, were reduced in recognition of the cheaper European currencies, while the Ministry of Health approved a rise in the

prices of local medicines by between 20 to 50 per cent, or an average of 35 per cent.

Unfortunately, neither the ministry nor the Jordanian pharmaceutical factories bothered to explain and justify this rise. The public is entitled to be informed of the relevant facts in order to accept the price hike.

The prices of local pharmaceutical items were fixed in 1987 and kept constant since then. The current adjustment of prices is therefore no more than 3 per cent per year, accumulated over 10 years. This is a reasonable adjustment taking into account that the dinar was devalued in 1988/1989 and lost almost half of its value.

On the other hand the extremely low prices of Jordanian medicines in the local market became a source of embarrassment towards Arab and foreign importers of Jordanian medicines, who could not swallow the fact that they were required to pay more than the current retail price in the local Jordanian pharmacies in Amman.

This is not meant to justify the move. It is an attempt to understand and explain what happened.

By Dr. Fahed Faneh

### Jordanian Perspective

## Israel looks uneasy at possible U.S.-Iran thaw

By Musa Keilani

THE CLEAREST sign yet that Israel is indeed alarmed by what it sees as a possibility of a thaw in ties between the U.S. and Iran came with a news report that the American ambassador to Jerusalem had said that Washington saw Iranian involvement in the Nov. 17 massacre of tourists in southern Egypt.

Simultaneous with that came the unveiling of the so-called Hizbollah-trained German suicide-bomber who allegedly sought to wreak havoc in Israel. Granted that we do not know for sure whether Iran had a hand in the massacre of tourists in Luxor or whether Hizbollah had indeed recruited the German. Still, we cannot but view the Israeli claims with scepticism for several reasons, foremost among them the Jewish Likud's fear that improved relations between Washington and the new moderate regime in Tehran could lead to a diminishing role for itself as a "strategic ally" of the U.S. after all, in Israeli parlance and experience, such "strategic" alliance could be maintained and outlived only when there is instability and insecurity in the region.

A U.S.-Iranian "reconciliation," which seems a possibility now with Mohammed Khatami in power in Tehran, is indeed alarming for Israel.

Certainly it is not for us in Jordan to defend the Iranians. Tehran and its rough-shod media and spokesmen are more than capable of doing so.

But we do have a vested interest in seeing a better state of affairs in the Gulf region, and that could come only with a dramatic improvement in relations between the U.S. and Iran, and, of course, between Washington and Baghdad. It is a non-starter to expect better U.S.-Iraq relations under the present circumstances, but the indica-

tions we have seen so far encourage us to anticipate a new era in U.S.-Iran ties for the sake of the entire region (But the key here is whether Washington is genuinely interested in seeking better understanding with Tehran. Will the vested interests in Capitol Hill, particularly the Defense establishment — which thrives through its military industrial complex on scaring third parties into buying American weaponry — allow such a course of events? Obviously, other players in the region are also sending signals that they too have accepted the new rule of the game — give the new regime in Tehran the benefit of doubt until it proves otherwise.

It was a relief to hear Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa declaring that Cairo did not have any knowledge of Iranian involvement in the Luxor attack. That denial followed a vaguely-worded State Department dismissal of the Jerusalem Post report of the U.S. ambassador's assertion, which was allegedly made during a meeting with the Israeli foreign minister, David Levy.

It was also rather ironic to note that the international media did not even bother to pick up reports in the left-wing press in Egypt that the Israeli secret service, Mossad, or even the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) could have had an indirect role in the Luxor massacre. Very conveniently, none of the six (or less or even more) gunmen reportedly involved in the killings is alive today to tell the real story.

In any event, we cannot but treat the Jerusalem Post report in the same vein, with the same seriousness or dismissal, as we treated the reports of Mossad or CIA involvement in the massacre (allegedly as punishment for Egypt for leading the Arab boycott of the MENA con-

ference in Doha).

The allegation that Hizbollah recruited a German, Stefan Josef Smirk, and sent him on a suicide mission to Israel should also be seen in the same light thrown by our awareness that Israel's objective could be to strengthen its "security" arguments when U.S. President Bill Clinton meets Israeli Premier Benjamin Netanyahu next month.

Just as Netanyahu is preparing himself, so is Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, who is expected to present a comprehensive plan to revive the troubled peace process when he meets Clinton.

As such, both sides are moving forward on their own tracks. But does the situation spell optimism? Quite unlikely, given the clear Israeli intention not to give up the bulk of West Bank land to the Palestinians.

But that is a different issue altogether. In the immediate context of the regional situation, given the possibility of Iran's rehabilitation, we in Jordan strongly believe that the Khatami regime should be given continuous encouragement not only to undo Iran's image as a sponsor of terrorism but also to live up to a new image of a responsible regional player with all that entails.

In this vein, we also welcome the talks scheduled between Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazmi, and the UAE leadership on the long-running dispute over the Gulf islands of Greater and Lesser Tunbs and Abu Musa.

Let us hope that all efforts by Israel, and perhaps others who do not want peace and security in the Gulf, will be foiled by the realisation and appreciation of all concerned that there seems to be seriousness on the part of President Khatami to transform his country and its policies.

## 1997: Year-end review, part II

Gwynne Dyer reviews major political events of 1997 around the globe in this, the second of a two-part series.

IN THE Middle East, the big international news stories were the stalemate in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, the rather artificial confrontation between the United States and Iraq over Saddam Hussein's curbs on U.N. arms inspectors, and the ghastly massacre of 58 tourists by terrorists of the fundamentalist Gamaa Islamiya group at Luxor in Egypt in November. But the real news was in Iran and Turkey.

There will be no progress on Arab-Israeli peace until Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government is replaced, either by a national coalition or a general election. There will be no major new war between Iraq and the United States no matter how much both sides posture and bluster. And terrorism against tourists, alas, is nothing new in Egypt. Whereas it will matter greatly to the region and the world if Iran democratises fully — or if Turkish democracy fails.

Iran and Turkey are the giants of the region, with over 60 million people each, major resources, and substantial industry. Iran has been isolated and inward-looking since the Islamic revolution almost two decades ago, but it is already a half-democratic country. The election of reformist President Mohammad Khatami in May suggests that it may be able to turn into a fully democratic one.

By last month, Khatami was embroiled in bitter struggles with conservative ayatollahs on one front, and offering reconciliation with the United States on the other. If he survives, Iran's re-emergence on the diplomatic scene, and the example of a working Islamic democracy, will transform politics and power in the Gulf region and beyond.

Meanwhile, the oldest working example of a secular democracy in a Muslim country is facing ruin. But the problem in Turkey is not the rather tame "Islamic fundamentalists" of former Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's Refah Party who were forced out of the coalition government in Ankara in July by army pressure.

Turkey's real problems are the growing militarisation of politics, and the profound corruption that now infects every major party. Both are due to the brutal war against Kurdish separatists in the south-east that has been paid for, in large measure, by "taxing" and tolerating the illegal drug trade that flourishes in the region. If the current attempts to clean up

the state apparatus fail, Turkey is headed for chaos, violence, and possibly collapse.

As for the larger Arab countries, most seem stuck in a time-war, ruled by autocratic regimes whose leaders have been in power for 15, 20, even 30 years. In some, like Iraq, the opposition is silent or in exile. In others, like Egypt, most opposition is bought off and only occasional outrages like the Luxor massacre mar the calm. In one, Algeria, there is constant terrorism and massacre by both sides, and 10,000 dead a year.

**The Middle East is in even worse shape than it seems. The political stagnation is accompanied almost everywhere by low economic growth rates and high birth rates, so every year the future gets darker.**

The Middle East is in even worse shape than it seems. The political stagnation is accompanied almost everywhere by low economic growth rates and high birth rates, so every year the future gets darker. In a quarter-century, if there is no great change, the region may swap places with Africa as the world's worst problem area.

It's very early to say that Africa has "bottomed out": the problems still outnumber the solutions by a wide margin. Civil wars still rage in Sudan and Somalia. Corrupt autocracies hang on all over the place, from nominally democratic Zimbabwe and Kenya to openly military regimes in Nigeria and Burundi. In one embarrassing incident last August, two of the three islands that make up the Republic of the Comoros broke away and asked to be re-colonised by France. (Paris refused.)

Nevertheless, there is a clear trend in Africa towards better government, pushed by a new generation of leaders who often work together to advance the process. The most striking example this year was the coalition of "new-generation" regimes, including Uganda, Rwanda, and Ethiopia, that quietly supported Laurent Kabila's triumphant advance across former Zaire.

It remains to be seen what Kabila can achieve in the newly renamed Democratic Republic of the Congo, but the overthrow of long-ruling dictator Mobutu Sese Seko in May was the necessary precondition to any attempt to rescue Africa's third-

largest country from poverty, ignorance and despair.

All around the continent there are other small and large signs of hope, from the smooth generational transition in which South Africa's President Nelson Mandela relinquished the leadership of the African National Congress to his chosen successor Thabo Mbeki in December, to the relative efficiency with which African peace-keeping forces re-imposed order in war-torn Liberia and Sierra Leone this year.

With 12 per cent of the world's population and only 2 per cent of its gross

domestic product, Africa is decades away from taking its proper place in the world even with the best possible leadership. But there is general recognition that the key problem has been political leadership, and rightly or wrongly, the feeling is spreading that the continent is turning a corner.

Which brings us, at last, to the Americas — and what a boring year it has been in the Western Hemisphere. They never ran out of stuff to fill the newspapers and TV bulletins, of course, but when you ask which events of the past year will make it into the history books of 50 years hence, you draw an almost complete blank.

The four-month hostage crisis at the Japanese Embassy in Lima might just make it into Peruvian history books, but it was basically a piece of television drama.

That leaves, for the most part, only small and rather tedious events like the Liberal government's narrow win in a premature election in Canada in June, or the retirement of former Chilean dictator General Augusto Pinochet as head of the Chilean army (at the age of 82) in September. But there is one exception: Mexico.

From the moment when an assassination suddenly made Ernesto Zedillo the ruling party's candidate for the presidency in 1994, people have hoped that he would turn out to be Mexico's Gorbachev, the man who would dismantle the machinery that guaranteed perpetual one-party rule. This was the year when he

delivered.

In the July elections, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) lost its majority in the lower house of Congress for the first time since its foundation almost 70 years ago. Then, in an even bigger shock, the various opposition parties actually managed to agree on a voting alliance that gave them power to block government spending plans, or even impeach cabinet ministers. President Ernesto Zedillo responded by doing — nothing.

He accepted the situation, and began to cooperate with the opposition-dominated lower house. It was the beginning of real democracy in Mexico, and the rest is probably unstoppable.

We have moved into the global village, but it is still a very big and complex world that's heading in many different directions at once. You can (and people do) construct a plausible case for almost any interpretation of where it's really heading, pessimistic or optimistic, just by choosing the right set of facts. And a single year is not long enough to constitute a real trend anyway.

But here, for what it's worth, is my list of the three most important decisions taken at the global level this year — and the striking thing is that they are all good news.

At Helsinki in March, the United States and Russia agreed to begin talks on a START 3 treaty as soon as the Russian Duma ratified the existing START 2 treaty. The new talks will have the goal of cutting each side's nuclear arsenal to only 2,000 missiles and warheads, down by 50 per cent from their cold war peak.

In Ottawa, in early December, over 100 countries signed a treaty banning the possession, use or sale of anti-personnel mines. It was pushed through by a unique alliance of governments and non-governmental organisations, and the negotiations were completed in less than two years. The U.S., China and Russia have not yet signed, but global public opinion will eventually force them to.

In Kyoto, also in December, over 150 countries hammered out a draft agreement on cutting greenhouse gas emissions in order to slow global climate change. It was a chaotic meeting that ended in a messy and inadequate compromise — not surprising, since everybody there was a human being — but the point was that they felt they had to come. And having come, they knew that they could not leave without making a deal.

That is the global village at work, and it's actually a lot better than where we used to live.



## A string of global catastrophes — all blamed on El Nino

By Myriam Chaplain-Rinu  
Agence France Presse

PARIS—Forest fires in Asia, floods in South America, an aircraft crash, drought, disease, famine, economic disaster — the list of world-wide catastrophes blamed on the El Nino climatic phenomenon is staggering. So staggering, in fact, that scientists who for the first time were able to sound the advance warning of the massive weather monster's arrival in March are classifying this year's El Nino as the worst this century. And all the signs are it is going to continue well into next year.

Named after the child Jesus in Spanish (El Nino literally means "The Boy" or "The Child") because it reaches the height of its powers around Christmas, the freakish event is in fact a mysterious movement of a vast body of warm water bigger than the United States from the eastern Pacific Ocean, near Australia, to just off Chile's coastline. Spanish conquistadores spoke of it in their accounts of the new world, although serious study of El Nino has only been around for the last 30 years.

Occurring only once every two to seven years, the phenomenon results in extreme conditions, in many countries: droughts in some, flooding in others. It also sets off high winds, extreme temperature fluctuations and generally turns the world's weather on its head. Such was the case this year. Deadly flooding hit equatorial Africa, particularly Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Ethiopia, and South America, notably Argentina

and Peru. Mexico suffered an unseasonable cold snap in November that killed at least a dozen people. Meanwhile, arid, tinderbox conditions aggravated huge forest fires in Australia, and Indonesia — where the choking, impenetrable smog was said to have caused the deaths of 234 people in an Indonesian Airlines crash. Drought continues in some regions, also affecting Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Central America and China.

Southern African states are expected to feel the brunt in 1998. The consequences have been disease and crop failures in many key producing countries, and corresponding blights on world financial markets and pressure of international donor and humanitarian organisations.

Yves du Penhoat, a French researcher following El Nino's progress from French and U.S. satellite data, says its latest incarnation is "without doubt stronger than the record episode of 1982-83, considered up to now the big one of the century."

Then, 2,000 lives were lost, thousands were left homeless and 13 billion dollars' worth of damage was caused after flooding in the United States, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia and Cuba, and hurricanes in Hawaii and Tahiti wreaked havoc. But while the warning signs were noted well in advance this time around, the magnitude of those signs — well in excess of those accompanying El Nino's last jaunt across the Pacific — have authorities "fearing" the devastation will continue to at least May next year.

## Levitating clones: Scientific breakthroughs to contemplate

By Gwynne Dyer

THEY HAVE discovered a technology that doubles the amount of energy a car engine gets out of a litre of petrol. The technique, which uses fuel-cell technology to extract electricity from petrol (gas), was announced by U.S. Energy Secretary Federico Pena in October.

"We have a terrific breakthrough here," said Pena, predicting that non-polluting electric cars powered by these fuel cells could be on the road by 2010. It's a major engineering development that could slow the greenhouse effect and keep oil prices from going through the roof — but it's not going to change the world.

They also discovered a cure for baldness this year, which many people (most of them male) will consider far more important. A drug called finasteride (trade name Propecia), derived from another drug that was originally developed to treat enlarged prostate glands, is now in the certification process in the U.S. and Britain.

"I was a nasty person when I was bald," said Mark O'Donnell, one of the test subjects. "I was bitter and felt cheated. They will have to take Propecia out of my cold, dead hands." Great for the afflicted minority, but for the hairy majority, an anti-balding drug isn't all that earth-shaking either.

Every year sees lots of new technologies, new drugs, and new techniques. Much more rarely does a whole new field open up, with the prospect of transforming whole economies and societies. This year, however, we may have seen two such breakthroughs.

One is the advent of practical cloning and genetic modification of animals, with all that implies for reshaping and replicating animals — and humans too, if we wish to go that way.

In February, scientists at the Roslin Institute in Scotland revealed the existence of "Dolly", a sheep grown from a cell taken from her mother's udder. They all swore blind that they would never clone a human being, of course — but they did say that it would be technically possible within two years.

In July, Dr. Ron James of PPL Therapeutics, the Scottish firm that funded the Roslin research, announced that

their next goal was to breed sheep and cows with human DNA who would "manufacture" key components of human blood in their bodies. "We know from our work with 'Dolly' that we can create genetically engineered animals from a single cell," he said. "Now we want to use that technology to produce one of the fundamental constituents of the human body."

In the same month, at Juntendo University in Japan, a team led by Dr. Yoshinori Kuwahara released pictures of an "artificial womb" in which they have been bringing premature goat foetuses to term.

The embryos were removed from their mothers at 17 weeks and spent the rest of their gestation period in an open-topped acrylic tank filled with liquid at blood temperature that simulated amniotic fluid. The placenta was replaced by a machine that pumped oxygen and nutrients into the embryo's blood.

"This system should be used on behalf of the mother who cannot keep the foetus in her uterus," said Professor Kuwahara. "If I have time and money for experiments, maybe within 10 years we will have made the move from animals to humans." But alert observers noted that the same technique might be used to grow clones from human tissue for use as "organ banks," without any need for messy wombs and meddling mothers.

Growing complete human beings, even clones, and then "harvesting" organs from them would be illegal anywhere on earth. (It's called murder.) But in October Dr. Jonathan Slack of Bath University in England announced that he can create headless frog embryos by manipulating certain genes. The same technique could easily be applied to human beings, he observed — which might solve the ethical dilemma of growing humans as organ banks.

"It occurred to me that a half-way house could be reached," Slack added. "Instead of growing an intact (human) embryo, you could genetically reprogramme the embryo to suppress growth in all the parts of the body except the bits you want, plus a heart and blood circulation."

So when your vital organs start to

fail, the doctors may just clone a "partial embryo" from one of your cells, grow it in a Kuwahara tank, and harvest healthy, rejection-proof new organs from it. Some people will call it murder, and some won't — and that's going to be one of the major fault lines of 21st-century politics.

The other big discovery of the year is techniques for cancelling, or at least seriously reducing, the pull of gravity.

It began, innocently enough, with a levitating frog. Researchers at the University of Nottingham in England and the University of Nijmegen in the Netherlands have discovered that very strong magnetic fields create an opposing magnetic field in organic material. The two magnetic fields then repel each other — which caused a frog to float two metres (six feet) in the air.

"It works because it actually distorts the electron orbits in the frog's atoms," explained Professor Peter Main of Nottingham University's physics department. "That generates a tiny current, which generates a magnetic field in the opposite direction from the main magnet.... If the magnetic field pushes the frog away with sufficient force, you overcome gravity and the frog will float."

The magnetic field that lifted the frog — and grasshoppers, and fish, and plants — was 16 tesla, a million times more powerful than the earth's natural magnetic field. But the scientists are already talking of a wider magnet (the field does not need to be stronger) that could lift a human being.

There would be certain uses for such a technology — levitating burn victims, for example — but for really serious weight-lifting, we need Podkletnov's machine.

Dr. Eugene Podkletnov is a Russian physicist who was carrying out tests a few years ago on a rapidly spinning, superconducting ceramic disc enclosed in a low-temperature vessel called a cryostat, when a colleague wandered in smoking a pipe. The smoke drifted over the cryostat — and rose vertically to the ceiling.

"It was amazing," said Podkletnov. "We couldn't explain it." So they carried out more tests, and found that all objects placed above the spinning disc showed a small drop in weight, as if

they were partly shielded from the effects of gravity. They dropped everything else and went after the new phenomenon, because anti-gravity really would change the world.

Conventional science says that anti-gravity is impossible, but some scientists point to a long-sought side-effect of Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, in which spinning objects can distort gravity. It was long assumed, however, that this effect would be far too small to measure in a lab.

With normal materials, the effect is very small, but a Japanese team led by Professor Hideo Hayasaka at Tokoku University has just measured it. They spun a gyroscope up to 18,000 revolutions per minute, put it in an airtight container, and let it fall through two laser beams about 6 feet (two metres) apart. It consistently took about 1/25,000th of a second longer to fall that distance than a non-spinning object. Spinning made it lighter.

That modest effect is not going to lift any spaceships out of the earth's gravity well — but Dr. Ning Li at the University of Alabama suspects that the atoms inside superconductors may magnify the effect enormously. So does the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), which is funding her research. But Podkletnov is still ahead of the pack.

Dr. Podkletnov has now moved his research to Tampere University of Technology in Finland, and the latest version of his anti-gravity device produces stunning results. Objects suspended over it show a two per cent drop in weight — and if you hang two of the devices in a vertical line, the weight loss doubles. And this is not fringe science: Podkletnov's research has been accepted for publication by Britain's Institute of Physics.

Podkletnov's anti-gravity generators are 30 cm. (12 in.) in diameter, and do not consume huge amounts of power. If two can produce a four per cent weight loss, what would 50 do? Or 51? We could be on the brink of a revolution in transport, and above all in space flight: instead of boosting payload into orbit on a hugely expensive and polluting tower of flame, you just remove its weight and float it up.

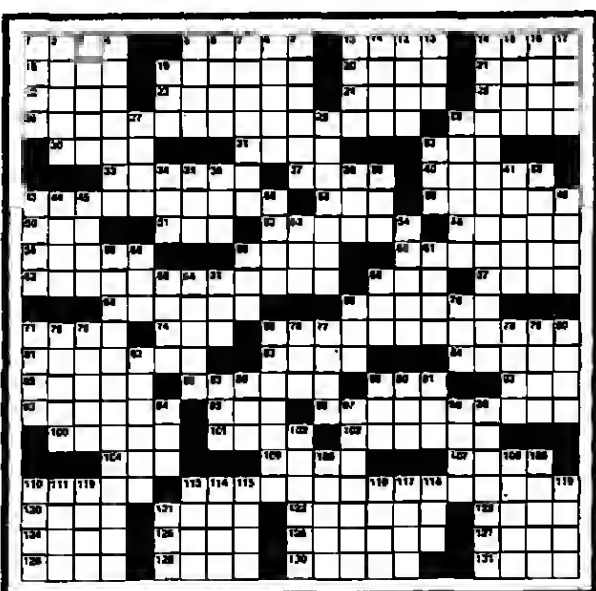
You could even levitate the clones.

## The Crossword

FOR THE MOST PART

By Alan O'Schwartz

- |               |             |           |             |
|---------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| ACROSS        | DOWN        | ACROSS    | DOWN        |
| 1. Aerial     | 1. Movie    | 1. Cheap  | 1. Movie    |
| 2. Blue nose  | 2. Believe  | 2. Cheap  | 2. Believe  |
| 3. Blue nose  | 3. Believe  | 3. Cheap  | 3. Believe  |
| 4. Blue nose  | 4. Believe  | 4. Cheap  | 4. Believe  |
| 5. Blue nose  | 5. Believe  | 5. Cheap  | 5. Believe  |
| 6. Blue nose  | 6. Believe  | 6. Cheap  | 6. Believe  |
| 7. Blue nose  | 7. Believe  | 7. Cheap  | 7. Believe  |
| 8. Blue nose  | 8. Believe  | 8. Cheap  | 8. Believe  |
| 9. Blue nose  | 9. Believe  | 9. Cheap  | 9. Believe  |
| 10. Blue nose | 10. Believe | 10. Cheap | 10. Believe |
| 11. Blue nose | 11. Believe | 11. Cheap | 11. Believe |
| 12. Blue nose | 12. Believe | 12. Cheap | 12. Believe |
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| 27. Blue nose | 27. Believe | 27. Cheap | 27. Believe |
| 28. Blue nose | 28. Believe | 28. Cheap | 28. Believe |
| 29. Blue nose | 29. Believe | 29. Cheap | 29. Believe |
| 30. Blue nose | 30. Believe | 30. Cheap | 30. Believe |



Diagramless, 19x19

By Frances Burton

- |           |           |           |           |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| ACROSS    | DOWN      | ACROSS    | DOWN      |
| 1. Cheap  | 1. Movie  | 1. Cheap  | 1. Movie  |
| 2. Cheap  | 2. Movie  | 2. Cheap  | 2. Movie  |
| 3. Cheap  | 3. Movie  | 3. Cheap  | 3. Movie  |
| 4. Cheap  | 4. Movie  | 4. Cheap  | 4. Movie  |
| 5. Cheap  | 5. Movie  | 5. Cheap  | 5. Movie  |
| 6. Cheap  | 6. Movie  | 6. Cheap  | 6. Movie  |
| 7. Cheap  | 7. Movie  | 7. Cheap  | 7. Movie  |
| 8. Cheap  | 8. Movie  | 8. Cheap  | 8. Movie  |
| 9. Cheap  | 9. Movie  | 9. Cheap  | 9. Movie  |
| 10. Cheap | 10. Movie | 10. Cheap | 10. Movie |
| 11. Cheap | 11. Movie | 11. Cheap | 11. Movie |
| 12. Cheap | 12. Movie | 12. Cheap | 12. Movie |
| 13. Cheap | 13. Movie | 13. Cheap | 13. Movie |
| 14. Cheap | 14. Movie | 14. Cheap | 14. Movie |
| 15. Cheap | 15. Movie | 15. Cheap | 15. Movie |
| 16. Cheap | 16. Movie | 16. Cheap | 16. Movie |
| 17. Cheap | 17. Movie | 17. Cheap | 17. Movie |
| 18. Cheap | 18. Movie | 18. Cheap | 18. Movie |
| 19. Cheap | 19. Movie | 19. Cheap | 19. Movie |

Last Week's Cryptograms

1. Cheap shopper hits all the bargain stores in new shopping center to get lowest prices possible.
2. Grandpa, once family solitaire champ, now looks on ruefully as grandkids play the game with computer.
3. Pier pressure is too much as hurricane winds batter moored shrimp boat and smash its wooden sides.
4. Which wife wishes to watch caldron while others dance?

CRYPTOGRAMS

1. RQLP UGBJT RQJPA GH DQT SGJPU DGRJ

BLPL PWAJQJTL IG DBU W HWAS.

— By Earl Ireland

2. WQL ELSE VN LUGHIWYTC ICJ QJZ FYRZ

IZL CLJLJ WY YDLC PTLJ WQL JYJZE YN

YDDYWGCTWS ICJ ECHMLEE.

— By Vivian G. Collins

3. CRIPOLR YHLSOP VIR VY RNOO CINDOVL

CQAVR. AO DVR JOCR ROCR CQVNOV JIR

SOUR YIELRELD XR RAO CEDAR VY CXU.

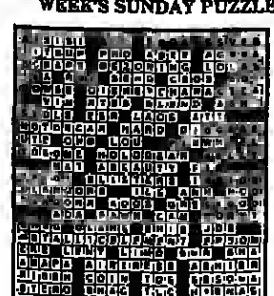
— By Duane H. McGee

4. FLOP WONT TAMCTRT TWAC GINA CANT

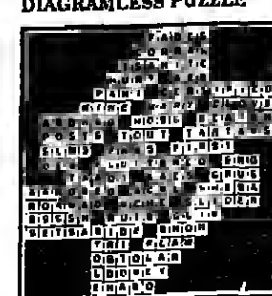
MIX URGI XGTL AP UGFL TARC.

— By Ed Huddeson

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S SUNDAY PUZZLE



SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DIAGRAMLESS PUZZLE



# London Bridge

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# Jordan, PNA sign agreements on tourism and specifications

By Ghalia Alul  
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Kingdom fears that Israel will continue to hamper trade exchanges with the Gaza Strip and the West Bank despite a number of agreements signed recently between Jordan and the Palestine National Authority (PNA). Both sides signed two accords in the West Bank town of Ramallah on Thursday to encourage tourism and to set standards for product specifications, a vital step for trade exchanges that have remained minimal.

Jordanian officials said they hoped to see improved bilateral trade exchanges — put on hold because of tough Israeli policies impeding the flow of goods across the

King Hussein Bridge.

Israel, they say, has been trying to maintain its monopoly over the Palestinian market which absorbs between \$2.7 billion and \$4 billion a year of Israeli-made products.

During the two-day meetings of the Jordanian-Palestinian Joint Ministerial Committee, delegates stressed the importance of encouraging their private sectors to generate more investments and boost trade exchanges.

"Trade exchanges between the two sides did not reach the aspired level," said the minutes of the meeting signed by Deputy Prime Minister for Development Affairs, Jawad Anani, and PNA Finance Minister Mohammad Nashashibi.

"Efforts should be coordinated in order to encounter the Israeli obstacles hindering trade exchange between Jordan and Palestine," it added.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat attended the signing ceremony of the two accords and said they will help "consolidate the twin relationship between Jordan and the PNA."

A 1995 trade protocol signed by Jordan and the PNA exempted national goods from custom duties and all other fees and taxes — with the exception of a sales tax imposed by Jordan and a value added tax imposed by the PNA.

Jordanian officials said they told the PNA they would study their proposal to eliminate the

sales taxes imposed on Palestinian products on grounds it was hurting their competitiveness in the Kingdom's market.

The PNA also agreed to consider widening the list of products imported from Jordan and to present to Amman a new list of Palestinian goods that could be exported in line with long-term plans to attain bilateral free trade.

Dr. Anani said the "issue of expanding the list of products imported from Jordan and other countries" will be addressed during a meeting between Israel and the PNA next week.

The PNA, running Gaza and parts of the West Bank under an interim agreement, needs Israeli approval for most of its imports and exports as the Jewish state controls security along the borders.

According to minutes of meeting, both sides agreed to have banks provide credit facilities to finance trade exchanges.

They also agreed to help facilitate import procedures — a headache for Jordanians and Palestinians alike.

They said the joint transport committee will hold a meeting in Amman next week to find alternative means to transport goods between both sides.

Israeli border restrictions have long impeded the transport of goods between Jordan and PNA areas.

Palestinian officials proposed the elimination

of the back-to-back system which they say has been hindering the flow of goods between the two sides.

Jordan and the PNA emphasized the importance of taking advantage of the recent Japanese grant to reconstruct the King Hussein Bridge in order to facilitate the flow of goods and movement of people.

They also agreed to facilitate procedures at crossing points and increase working time to 24 hours.

Both sides also agreed to look into ways to enhance the exchange of agricultural products and facilitate the export of Palestinian products transiting through Jordan to other Arab and Gulf states.

Also on Thursday, Dr. Anani had a meeting with Mr. Arafat who expressed hopes that the "successful meetings" would enhance Jordanian-Palestinian relations.

Asked if the meetings in Ramallah would pave the way for a tripartite meeting grouping the Kingdom, Israel and the PNA, Dr. Anani said Jordan would "call for such a meeting if there was a need for it."

He added that Jordan will present some of the points agreed on with the PNA to Israel with the aim of reaching a common understanding on these issues.

Dr. Anani said the next meeting for the ministerial committee will be held in Jordan in February.

Under the tourism deal, signed by Tourism and Antiquities Minister Aqel Biltaji, and the Palestinian Minister of Civil Administration, Jamil Tarifi, Jordan and the PNA agreed to facilitate and support tourism between them through the exchange of information and technical expertise.

They also agreed to encourage the role of the private sector in the establishment of specialized tour investment companies as well as organize tour exhibitions and exchange visits of Jordanian and Palestinian journalists.

Following the signing, Mr. Biltaji stressed the importance of coordinating efforts with the PNA in the field of tourism, noting that the accord was the first of its kind the PNA reaches with an Arab or foreign country.

Jordan and the PNA also agreed to study the possibility of reaching common specifications and standards for products subject to trade exchanges between them.

Under the agreement signed by Industry, Trade and Supply Minister Hani Mulki and Palestinian Trade Minister Maher Masri, the two sides will recognize certificates of specifications and quality in each country.

Under the agreement, Jordan and the PNA will exchange expertise, trainees and information pertaining to specifications and standards.

## HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28, 1997

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

**ARIES:** (March 21 to April 19) Are you concerned an older person won't like you? You've got the place fixed up? Don't bother worrying. The ambience is perfect, it's so you. He or she will just get to know you a little better, and love you anyway. It will just make your relationship stronger.

**TAURUS:** (April 20 to May 20) You don't like to travel that much. You think it's too expensive and takes you away from familiar things. That's why it's nice to have people from far away enter your sphere of influence. Make your hospitality available to people who have had experiences widely different from yours. It'll give you something to talk about for ages.

**GEMINI:** (May 21 to June 21) There's money coming in today. It looks like it's a gift from a partner. Or perhaps it's a stock dividend. It could also be a pay-back on a loan or an inheritance. Since the mail isn't delivered on Sunday, you may not find out about it until tomorrow. That's OK. It still counts.

**CANCER:** (June 22 to July 22) You're getting quite a bit of attention lately. A person you met at work could be interested in a more personal relationship. Another casual acquaintance has an eye to becoming more familiar. You don't have to go for either of these options if you don't feel like it. You're the one in control. Just remember that and you'll do fine.

**LEO:** (July 23 to August 22) There are secrets to be handled today — some rumours to be squelched and others to be started. Curtail your social life for little while, as you get your private life back in order. Don't worry. You're in such a good mood, you'll have fun no matter what happens.

**VIRGO:** (August 23 to September 22) This is the day to visit friends. Have you prepared gifts to distribute all over town? If so, that's your perfect excuse. If not, pick up a few gift packages at your local deli to spread good cheer and good nourishment. You'll make this a day to remember.

**LIBRA:** (September 23 to October 22) An older person wants some of your time and attention today. Be nice. It could turn out well for you. This person is looking for someone with exactly your skills. So just be your own charming self and you'll attract attention from one who can help you succeed.

**SCORPIO:** (October 23 to November 21) This is a great day for you to travel. If you have a female relative you haven't seen in a while, make her the object of your excursion. She'll have advice you can use to make more money. She may even have a few goodies to send home with you when you go. In other words, it's the perfect day to take a trip to Grandma's house.

**SAGITTARIUS:** (November 22 to December 21) You'll do well today shopping for bargains. That's especially true if you can get a Cancer to come along with you. This person already knows where the bargains hang out. You could even spring for lunch as a way of paying for these services. And you'll have a great time while you're at it.

**CAPRICORN:** (December 22 to January 20) Focus on the one you love today. If you don't have a romantic partner, this is an excellent time to find one. In fact, you should make that your first priority. Do it by hanging out where people you like tend to congregate. A caring, frugal person would be a good choice for you. Pick the most likely prospect and see what you can make happen.

**AQUARIUS:** (January 21 to February 19) There's work to be done today. You've had a lot of time for fun, but now you'll get to take care of business. There's some shopping you knew would have to be done, and there are the regular household chores. They might be dull, but they also have to get finished.

**PISCES:** (February 20 to March 20) You and your sweetheart need some private time. Sometimes you communicate more when you don't say anything. That's because the communication is coming from the heart and soul. That's not to say your mind isn't involved, but what you're most interested in is the depth of the emotion. Make this your objective.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

## Invitation for Pre-qualification of Consultants for Supervision of Construction of the Integrated Development Project of the Southern Ghors

The Government of Jordan has the final designs and tender documents prepared for the works listed below. It has also secured the finance for the construction and supervision of these works. The three Dams listed are to be constructed of Roller Compacted Concrete (RCC) with properties as described:-

- Wala Dam, 49m high, 300m long, 9.3 MCM storage capacity, with an estimated rolled crete volume 185,000m<sup>3</sup>.
- Mujib Dam, 62m high, 600m long, 35 MCM storage capacity, with an estimated rolled crete volume 750,000 m<sup>3</sup>.
- Tannur Dam, 89m high, 240m long, 16.8 MCM storage capacity, with an estimated rolled crete volume 280,000m<sup>3</sup>.

• Division weir at Mujib, with a 1.3kms long tunnel, the southern conveyor 73.5km, northern conveyor 28km long, and irrigation infrastructure for 11,882 dunums. The services will include site supervision and general contact administration during construction and maintenance period, including necessary reporting and preparation of project Manuals, with a prior phase to review the design and tender documents it is anticipated that the services will be divided into four separate contracts:-

1. Supervision of construction for Wala and Tannur Dams
2. Supervision of construction for Mujib Dam
3. Supervision of construction for Mujib Weir and Conveyors
4. Supervision of construction for Irrigation Infrastructure

International Consultants with experience in the design and/or supervision of RCC dams are invited to submit pre-qualifications applications for the above contracts 1 and 2, and those with experience in similar works to apply for qualification for the other two contracts.

International consultants are required to joint venture with Jordanian consulting firms classified under class A or B in the fields of water supply, sewerage, roads, and electromechanical engineering. The International Consultants interested to participate in pre-qualification for the above projects are invited to collect the pre-qualification documents in accordance with the following terms:

1. Members of each joint venture are requested to provide with their pre-qualifications documents, a letter of intention duly signed by all members stating that the joint venture is committed to submit a duly legalised agreement, on award and before contract signature.
2. All given information must be correct and accurate.
3. The International Consultants shall comply with the Law of the Jordanian Engineering Association regarding registration.
4. The deadline set for the collection of pre-qualification documents shall be at 13:00 Jordanian local time on January 10, 1998.
5. The Pre-qualification proposals shall be submitted to the Jordan Valley Authority (Address below) no later than 13:00 local time on February 7th 1998, and must include on the envelope "Subject" Pre-qualification of Consultants for Supervision of Construction of the Integrated Development Project of the Southern Ghors.

### Address

Dr. Dureid Mahasneh  
Head of the Special Committee for the Mujib and Southern Ghors Project

Amman P.O. Box 2769 - Jordan  
Fax: 962 - 6 - 689916  
Tel.: 962 - 6 - 689400

Dr. Dureid Mahasneh  
Secretary General  
Jordan Valley Authority

## Jordan expected to agree oil accord renewal with Iraq today

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Jordan and Iraq will strike a deal to renew an oil accord on Sunday after talks here between the two countries' oil ministers, an official said Saturday.

The official gave no other details of the accord, under which Jordan has said it hopes to increase imports from Iraq, its sole supplier, and reduce the price paid.

Jordanian Energy Minister Mohammad Saleh Al Hourani said earlier he was convinced his talks would have "positive results which will reinforce the solid rela-

tions between the two countries."

He had told reporters on his arrival on Friday evening that his country wanted to raise the amount of oil supplied under a deal to replace the current accord that expires in January.

Iraqi Oil Minister Amer Rashid said Iraq wanted to provide Jordan with all its oil needs.

"The Iraqi position will not change and it consists of fulfilling all Jordan's needs in petrol and its derivatives," he told the official news agency INA.

Iraq, under an oil embargo since its 1990

invasion of Kuwait, is permitted by the United Nations to conduct a separate trade protocol with Jordan, once its main trading partner.

Mr. Hourani had told AFP in Amman he hoped to convince Iraq to reduce the price of oil from about \$19.15 a barrel currently and increase the supply by about seven per cent.

Iraq increased the price it charges Jordan by \$4 a barrel in January.

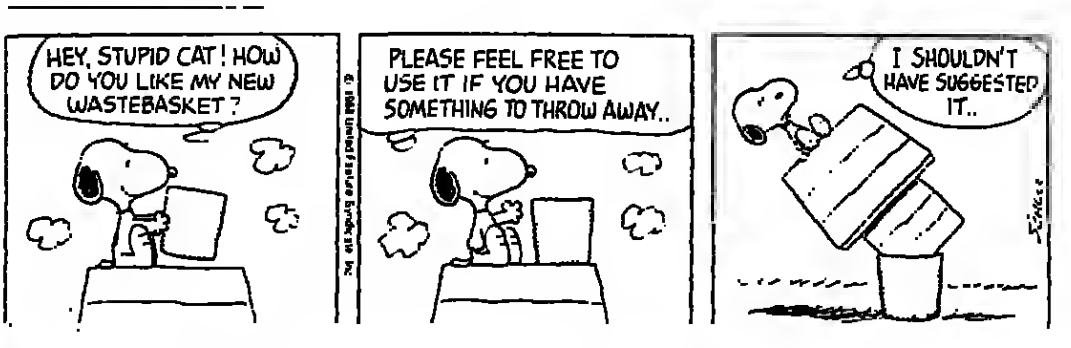
Jordan imported about \$550 million worth of oil (70,000 barrels per day) from Iraq last year.

## THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

1. Greeting word  
5. Sixth Greek letter  
9. Overly excited  
14. Architect  
15. Saanen  
16. Israel's airline  
17. Stage classification  
17. Took advantage of  
18. Puerto  
19. Opened  
20. Cooked perfectly  
23. Boob tubes  
24. Swaggers  
25. Legal action grp.  
27. Pioneer filmmaker  
28. Veteran of many conflicts  
32. Goat-man  
35. Ear part  
36. Son of Judah  
37. S. American nat.  
39. Traffic-restricting phrase  
41. Actor Wallach  
42. Alban, the composer  
44. Demo ending?  
45. Having paddles  
47. "Skittle Players" painter  
49. Valuable stone  
50. Gilbert of "Roseanne"  
51. Contributor  
55. City  
57. Something that deserves another  
60. Singer John or Bonnie  
62. Caustic remark  
63. Lamb's pen name  
64. God of Islam  
65. Runny cheese  
66. Shore patrol grp.  
67. Lager and ale  
68. Practice punches  
69. Vocalized team spirit

DOWN  
1. Longstanding quarrels  
2. Plant new seeds  
3. Magic showpiece  
4. Self-effacement

## Peanuts



## Andy Capp



## Mutt'n'Jeff



## THE BETTER HALF.



## JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

CATHY  
PETIR  
QUIETY  
NIFEC

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here: \_\_\_\_\_

Yesterday's Jumbles: EXCEL OPERA BANGLE KNOW  
Answer: How the holiday gift-wrappers felt - BOXED IN



## Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

## Ministry floats prices of popular food except hommos, fool and falafel

**\*\*THE MINISTRY** of Supply has decided to float the prices of all popular dishes, but excluded the three most consumed meals — Hommos, fool and falafel. However, the ministry specified a ceiling which restaurants are not allowed to exceed for each dish. Supply Secretary General Mohammad Smadi said restaurants will be subject to stiff penalties that can go as far as closing the restaurant if any of them exceeds the price ceiling. Popular restaurants are those which do not carry any touristic classification.

The ministry did not announce the lists of food and price ceilings, but more than ten types are to be included in the lists which are expected to be made public within few days. Dr. Smadi said restaurants should show the type of food and the price in a list that should be certified from the ministry and the concerned union and posted at a visible location. Not abiding by this condition is considered to be a clear violation, Dr. Smadi stressed.

Restaurants expect this step to create competition that would reflect on prices to be moderate. The decision is an incentive to the restaurants to provide good quality at real prices, they said noting that customer demand will be the factor specifying both the quality and the price (Al Ra'i).

## JIC will not divest its equity in Al Ra'i and Jordan Times

**\*\*THE JORDAN Investment Corporation (JIC)**, the government's arm handling state investments in various companies, has no intention in the foreseeable future to divest its equity in the Jordan Press Foundation (JPF) which publishes the two dailies Al Ra'i and the Jordan Times. According to JIC Director General Mohammad Batayneh, the JIC investment in Al Ra'i is around 15 per cent and such a rate is not a burden on the management of the JPF. "The corporation is represented by one member on the board," he noted.

Mr. Batayneh went on to say: "Actually, we are not violating the law which specifies that state equity in newspapers should not exceed 30 per cent." However, he added, if the investment of the Social Security Corporation is considered, the percentage would exceed the 30 per cent level. According to some opinions, the funds of the Social Security Corporation are private funds (Al Dustour).

## JTC to consider lowering telephone tariffs again

By Iyad Waqfi  
Special to the Jordan Times

**AMMAN** — Jordan Telecommunications Company (JTC) will be considering during the coming few days decreasing tariffs on local, national and international telephone calls for 1998, JTC General Manager Mamoun Balqar told Al Ra'i and the Jordan Times

Saturday. He did not mention any figure but informed sources said the reduction will be between 35-50 per cent after the completion of the connections and erection of the maritime cables in the Red Sea.

Mr. Balqar said the company has reduced the tariffs on international calls and modified the structure of

local and national network earlier this year. "A study to evaluate the financial effect of the changes will be conducted and based on the study, the JTC will consider lowering the tariffs this year," he added.

According to the sources, maritime cables provide cheaper calls than those by satellites.

## Dudin signs JD4 million contract to build housing estate in Aqaba

**AQABA (Petra)** — The Aqaba Region Authority (ARA) Saturday awarded a local firm a JD4.85 million contract to build the infrastructure of the planned ninth housing estate in the Aqaba region.

Under the agreement which was signed by ARA President Marwan Dudin and the local firm's general

manager the project will be carried out within 30 months.

The project entails the construction of a 17,500-metre road network, a 17-kilometre long sewerage network, a 24-kilometre long water network plus electricity and telephone networks.

Mr. Dudin said the hous-

ing estate, which will be built on 570 dunums, is to be divided into 750 plots of land in addition to 42 dunums for schools and 47 dunums for a shopping centre. He said that a total of 3,000 housing units accommodating 15,000 inhabitants will be built under this agreement.

## Egypt to produce 50 per cent more gas within two years

**CAIRO (AFP)** — Within two years Egypt will produce 70 million cubic metres of gas, half as much again as today, thanks to new fields coming into operation, an Egyptian oil official has told AFP. The official in Egypt's oil ministry said that "between now and 1999, our country will produce 50 per cent more gas" than it produces now.

He said Egypt's oil reserves are estimated at "890 billion cubic metres distributed over 120 gas fields discovered during the last 16 years."

The gas fields are offshore in the Mediterranean, in the Nile Delta and the Western Desert.

In November, Italy's Edison, Britain's British Gas, and the Dutch Shell oil companies signed a con-

tract to extract gas from the northern Egyptian Rashid concession. Gas sales to the Egyptian General Petroleum Company (EGPC) are to begin in January 2000 and reach a total of 2.5 billion cubic metres per year.

The US oil company Amoco, Italy's Eni, and Spain's Repsol are also active in Egypt.

## Merrill Lynch predicts correction on Wall Street in '98

**NEW YORK (AFP)** — Wall Street will face a correction before gliding into an upswing in 1998, the U.S. investment firm Merrill Lynch has predicted.

In a mixed forecast for 1998, Merrill Lynch said that the stock market tended to rise for an average of three to 3-1/2 years and then undergo a correction. This happened in 1990 and 1994.

Key indexes like the Dow Jones Industrial Average and Standard and Poor's 500 index will hit record highs early next year and then tumble up to 25 per cent, predicted Richard McCabe, principal market analyst for Merrill Lynch.

The market correction will be followed by steady increases late next year and in early 1999, Mr. McCabe said.

The current Dow Jones record is 8,259.31 points, and Standard and Poor's is 983.79.

In addition, the Federal Reserve Commission will likely cut U.S. interest rates during 1998, according to Merrill Lynch.

"Deflation risks will overcome inflation risks in Greenspan's mind," Bruce Steinberg, the company's principal economist, said of the Federal Reserve (Fed) chairman.

Last week, the Fed decided to leave the rates unchanged. The day-to-day interbank rate is currently 5.5 per cent, after a

quarter-point increase in March.

The yield on U.S. Treasury bonds may tumble as low as 5.5 per cent over next year, the bank said. The current rates, around 5.95 per cent, have not fallen lower than 5.78 per cent since October 1993.

Meanwhile, inflation should remain less than two per cent throughout 1998, Merrill Lynch said. Over the past 12 months, it remained at 1.8 per cent.

The U.S. gross domestic product should grow 2.5 per cent in 1998, compared to four per cent this year, the company said. Already, the Asian financial crisis is responsible for a 0.5 per cent slowdown.

The crisis will also intensify the U.S. trade imbalance, since Asia counts for roughly 30 per cent of U.S. exports, the bank predicted.

Last year's predictions for 1997, foresaw that Wall Street would have a hard time keeping up with the 30 per cent growth in 1995 and 1996. In fact, the Dow Jones climbed by 22.9 per cent and Standard and Poor's increased 30 per cent.

## REUTERS The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	TL	NG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.7730	0.8961	1.4337	130.35	1.4350	1741.75	1.9975	5.9310
DE Mark	0.6640	-	0.3389	0.8086	73.92	0.8091	982.10	1.1267	3.3446
GB Sterling	1.6775	2.9640	-	2.3868	216.15	2.4072	2921.79	3.3508	9.9493
CH Franc	0.6975	1.2358	0.4153	-	90.90	1.0002	1214.02	138.39	4.1340
JP Yen	0.0077	1.3591	0.4567	1.0990	-	1.1000	13.35	163.12	4.5466
CA Dollar	0.6969	1.2349	0.4149	0.9985	1.10	-	1213.09	1.3912	4.1308
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0174	0.3419	0.8823	1337.79	0.8234	-	11.46	3.4032
NL Guilder	0.6006	88.72	0.2981	71.77	65.22	0.7180	871.53	-	2.9677
FR Franc	0.1886	0.2989	0.1004	24.1710	21.86	0.2419	33.68	33.6800	-

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7080	3.7508	0.3770	0.3600	0.3046	3.6724	1522.50	3.4020
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	-	5.2975	0.5325	0.1412	0.4302	6.1870	2160.42	4.8061
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1888	-	0.1005	0.097	0.0612	0.98	405.94	0.9071
Bahrain Dinar	2.86	1.8780	9.9486	-	9.66	0.9078	9.74	4038.46	9.0239
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	1.0304	0.10304	-	0.0637	1.01	418.27	0.9346
Kuwait Dinar	3.2835	2.3247	12.3162	1.2379	11.96	-	12.06	4993.18	0.9346
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1928	1.0213	0.1027	0.9912	0.0629	-	414.58	0.9264
Lebanese/1000	0.66	0.4650	2.4634	0.2476	2.3908	0.2000	2.4121	-	2.2345
Egyptian	0.2539	0.2081	1.1025	0.1108	1.0700	0.0895	1.0795	447.53	-

Energy									
Oil	Last	Previous							
Brent	17.25	17.32							
N. Texas	18.15	18.33							
Bonny	17.25	17.32							
Dubai	17.75	16.76							
UL Gas	171.00	171.00							

Metal Prices									
Metal	Bid	Offer							
Gold (oz's)	285.25	296							
Silver (oz's)	6.36	8.38							
Platinum (oz's)	364	367							
CU (3 Months)	1624	1627							
CU (3 Months)	1748	1763							
Zinc (3 Months)	1108	1112							
Lead (3 Months)	541	544							
Ni (3 Months)	6960	6990							

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)									
Currency	Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	1 Year				
USD	8.25	6.58	5.78	5.84	6.93				
GBP	7.38	7.55	7.52	7.52	7.62				
JPY	1.43	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.31				
DEM	3.59	3.62	3.72	3.81	3.81				
FRF	3.46	3.54	3.66	3.71	3.80				
CHF	1.26	1.38	1.50	1.56	1.66				
ITL	6.81	6.72	6.50	6.19	6.00				

JOD Cross Rates									
Currency	Buy	Sell							
US Dollar	0.708	0.710							
GB Sterling	1.187	1.1929							
DE Mark	0.3988	0.4008							
CH Franc	0.4934	0.4959							
FR Franc	0.1192	0.1198							
JP Yen	0.5422	0.5449							
NL Guilder	0.354	0.3558							
IT Lira	0.406	0.408							

**AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET**  
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHELSANI  
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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 27/12/1997

PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF SHARES	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGES
346,000	249,000	ARAB BANK	14.8	1.24	6	4400	1425400	324.75	322.00	2.75-
2,340	1,680	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	2	0.00	9	204130	367363	1.79	1.78	.01-
5,800	4,100	CAIRO AMMAN BANK	7.0	4.41	2	300	1020	3.33	3.40	.07+
1,200	890	MTD. EAST INV. BK.	82.1	0.00	1	250	313	1.20	1.29	.09+
2,680	1,700	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.3	4.11	2	2500	4265	1.71	1.71	-
9,300	4,600	THE HOUSING BK.	15.3	3.79	3	427	2232	5.12	5.12	-
4,180	1,850	JOR. KUWAIT BANK	10.6	0.00	5	4990	9930	2.08	1.99	.09-
980	620	JOR. GULF BANK	3.9	10.77	4	16250	10613	.66	.65	.01-
4,050	2,280	JOR. ISLAND BANK	12.5	0.00	31	12150	27001	2.39	2.45	.06+
1,530	1,080	UNION BK. SAV. INV.	9	0.00	2	550	610	1.11	1.11	-
4,990	2,500	ARAB BANKING CO.	22.4	0.00	1	300	930	3.17	3.10	.07-
BANK SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 230.78	CHG: -0.68	66	245357	1849676				
2,950	2,700	JORDAN INSURANCE	11.8	5.45	1	750	2063	2.75	2.75	-
6,170	3,150	ALJASSR AL-HAMAI	16.1	0.00	3	1500	5100	3.31	3.40	.09+
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 117.81	CHG: +0.43	4	2250	7163				
2,050	1,550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.3	5.21	6	10369	19908	1.92	1.92	-
7,500	3,750	VEHIC. OWNERS FED.	10.0	3.63	1	150	686	4.35	4.57	.22+
6,100	3,550	ARAB INTL. HOTELS	14.5	4.25	1	200	962	4.49	4.71	.22+
3,050	2,300	SHIPPING LINES	13.4	5.65	1	2300	5290	2.30	2.30	-
1,550	930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	3	250	262	1.05	1.05	-
1,010	850	REAL ESTATE INV.	13.4	6.19	1	250	243	.92	.97	.05+
4,050	2,280	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	25.2	0.00	4	1000	495	.52	.49	.03-
4,000	2,890	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	10.1	0.00	3	1550	5962	3.88	3.85	.03-
2,230	1,630	UNIFIED CO.	8.0	6.51	2	15000	25350	1.68	1.69	.01+
890	640	UNION LAND DEV.	9	0.00	1	5000	3500	.72	.70	.02-
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 114.23	CHG: +1.07	24	36094	62659				
4,450	2,750	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.0	3.70	39	11791	34214	2.83	2.97	.14+
11,160	9,200	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.2	4.47	6	397	4170	10.65	10.50	.15-
1,410	1,040	MOLES INDUSTRIES	9.6	1.73	1	200	729	1.07	1.11	.04+
9,000	5,800	JOR. WORSTED MILLS	11.2	2.88	15	5250	36098	6.77	6.95	.18+
4,700	3,440	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	11.4	4.82	7	20643	85664	4.16	4.15	.01-
1,800	1,400	GENERAL MINING	9	0.00	2	800	1075	2.05	2.15	.10+
4,800	5,000	ARAB CHEM. ENTER.	20.7	0.00	104	2000	729	7.04	7.30	.26+
1,420	1,050	RAJIA INDUSTRIES	9	0.00	1	2000	2460	1.23	1.23	-
6,000	4,400	DAR ALDAMA DV. INV.	13.8	4.42	4	2060	11659	5.70	5.65	.05-
3,650	2,220	ARAB ALUM. CHM.	6.6	1.73	1	2000	2460	2.70	2.80	.10+
680	450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.7	0.00	2	500	230	.46	.46	-
730	510	NATIONAL INDUS.	9	0.00	4	1950	1170	.60	.60	-
1,400	1,150	INTERNAT. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	4	2384	940	.41	.40	.01-
5,040	4,370	JOR. CHEM. INDUS.	21.6	3.78	3	450	2135	5.04	5.29	.25+
3,000	1,600	NATL. CABLE WIRE. MFAC	30.1	0.00	2	2000	2480	1.27	1.25	.02-
890	530	JOR. SULPHO-CHEM	9	0.00	8	6000	3483	.59	.59	-
1,160	810	ARAB PHARM. CHM.	15.1	0.00	1	200	295	1.48	1.48	-
1,800	820	UNIV. WOOD. INDUS.	9	.25	13	5000	5018	.86	.85	.01-
1,410	890	JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES	10.9	12.35	31	54000	42863	.81	.81	-
1,320	820	NATL. CEMENT	9	4.76	3	1000	877	1.47	1.47	-
970	610	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	16.3	0.00	3	1000	893	.90	.90	.01-
1,970	1,340	EL -ZAY READY WEAR	54.9	0.00	22	31550	47811	1.50	1.56	.06+
1,200	860	UNION CH. & WEG.	43.6	0.00	1	100	96	1.01	.96	.05-
840	570	MID-EAST COMPLEX	7.3	16.39	6	2350	1412	.60	.61	.01+
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 115.02	CHG: +0.73	190	154345	292576				
GRAND TOTAL		INDEX: 168.04	CHG: -0.07	284	438046	7212074				

PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 27/12/1997

I : New 12 months high  
 \* : New 12 months low  
 + : Stock divided during the past 12 months  
 N : Listed during the past 12 months  
 P : P/E ratio is 100 or more  
 - : Negative P/E  
 E : Earning is zero or N/A for the most recent year



# Amman to host 9th Pan-Arab Games in 1999

By Aileen Bannayan  
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The flag of the 9th Pan-Arab Games was officially hoisted at Amman International Stadium Friday following two days of talks between Jordan's sports officials and their counterparts from the Arab Sports Federation (ASF).

The ceremony ended months of speculation and confirmed the final date of the Games now scheduled for Aug. 1999.

In July, the ASF had originally approved Jordan's bid to host the Games in Amman in 2001 and Kuwait was chosen as a substitute in case Jordan withdrew its bid.

However, recent reports suggested that the ASF would rather have Amman hold the Games in 1999, slashing the time remaining to prepare for the event.

"The general consensus was that it was preferable that the Games be held in 1999 and we accepted. We are ready to host the event," Jordan Olympic Committee Vice Chairman Mouaffaq Al Fawwaz told the Jordan Times on Saturday.

The ASF delegation was headed by Secretary-General Othman Sa'ad, who underlined support for Jordan's bid saying sponsorship would be garnered through slashing the 50 per cent ASF margin of profit on promotion and television coverage in addition to aid from the Arab League estimated at around \$700,000.

A Cairo meeting of the Arab sports ministers in February is expected to officially confirm Jordan as host nation of the 9th Pan-Arab Games.

Dr. Fawwaz said the necessary infrastructure was available in Amman but said housing the event needs collective and immediate efforts to ensure the organisational success.

"We do not have time to lose. What we lack is a track and field stadium, some electronic timing machines and a multi-purpose indoor court," he said.

Dr. Fawwaz estimated the needed funds at about JD3-4 million during the coming two years.

The Games will be held two years ahead of schedule because of the recent decision to hold the 2nd Southwest Asian Games in Beirut in 2001 and the Mediterranean Games in Tunisia in the same year.

Although the two events were held four months apart this year, observers believe that organising them along with the Pan-Arab Games during the same year might not be favourable for the participating athletes.

Sports officials say that holding the Games in 1999 would be a very good opportunity for Arab athletes to prepare for the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

According to observers, ASF officials preferred to change the date to 1999 and move the Games from Amman to Kuwait in order to keep Iraq away from the Games — a move that would avert a possible boycott of other Arab teams whose relations with Baghdad are strained.

Although it was finally decided that Amman will host the Games, officials refused to comment on whether Jordan would invite Iraqi athletes after all.

The Games, designed to emphasise Arab brotherhood, were clouded by Lebanon's refusal to grant the Iraqi team entry visas for fear of angering Kuwait and Saudi Arabia who allocated around \$28 million to the 8th Games held last July in Beirut.

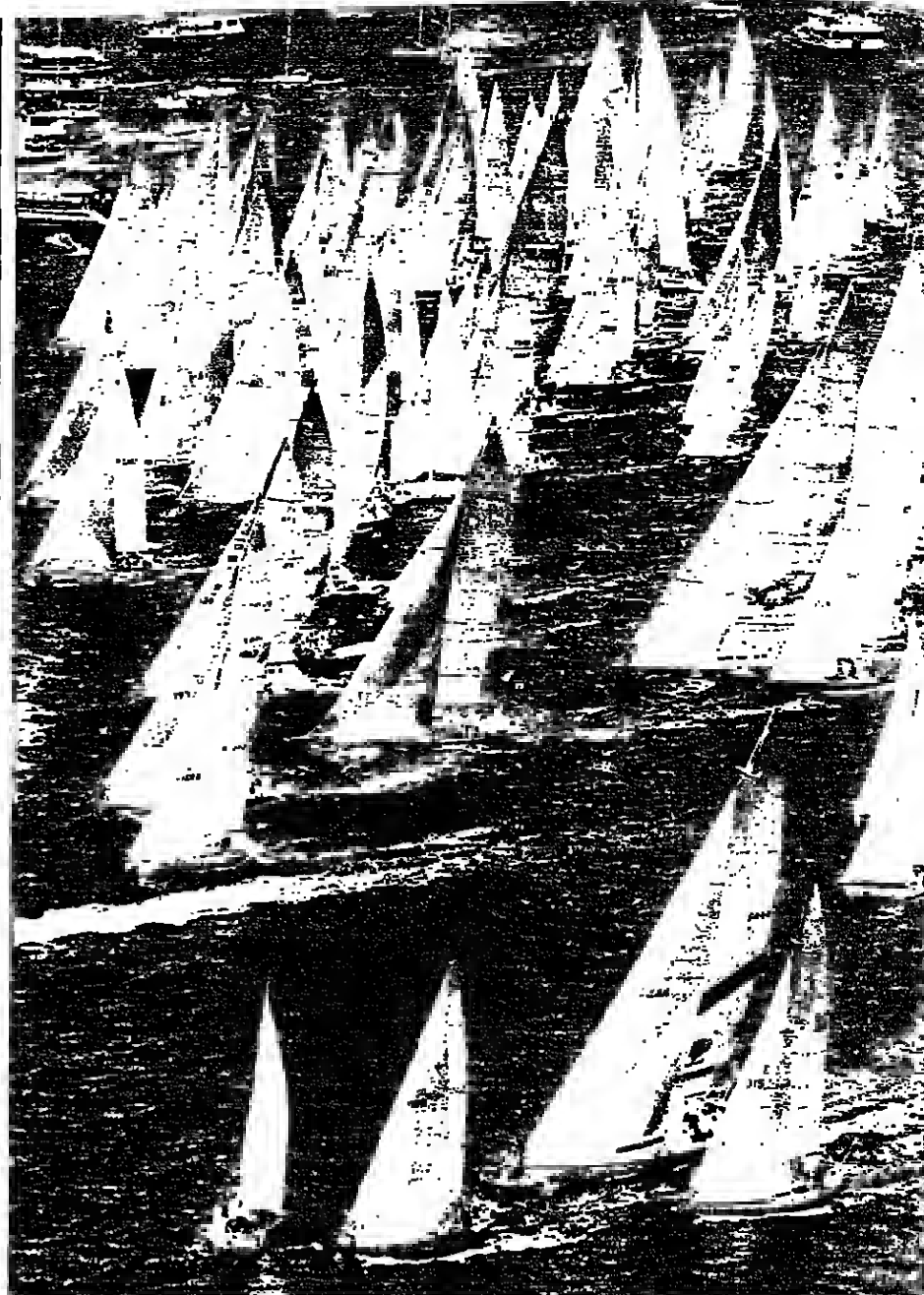
The Games witnessed the best Jordanian showing to date since the Pan-Arab Games were launched. Competing in 14 of the 20 events, Jordan finished 5th overall among 19 competing countries, taking a total of 40 medals, including 10 gold, 8 silver and 22 bronze medals compared to 9th overall in the 7th Pan-Arab Games in 1992, with 1 gold, 6 silver and 6 bronze medals.

Jordan's athletes gained more gold medals in Beirut than in all the past 7 Pan-Arab Games together where Amman took a total of 49 medals, including 7 gold, 16 silver, 26 bronze.

The Pan-Arab Games have only been held eight times since 1953: Alexandria 1953, Beirut 1957, Casablanca 1961, Cairo 1965, Damascus 1976, Morocco 1985, Damascus 1992 and Beirut 1997.

ASF officials said the Games will include 13 principal events: soccer, basketball, volleyball, handball, athletics, gymnastics, swimming, boxing, weightlifting, wrestling, equestrian, cycling and table tennis. Squash and chess and or any other exhibition events could be added by the organising country which also decides the mascot.

The event will also be followed by a Special Arab Games for the Handicapped.



Yachts fight for position at the start of the 53rd Sydney-to-Hobart race December 26. Australian maxi Brindabella leads, from Swedish maxi Nicorette and Hong-Kong-registered pocket maxi Exile with PL Lease Future Shock back in fourth place. A 115 strong fleet started this years race, considered one of the world's three leading blue water classics (Reuters photo)

## Favourite Brindabella takes lead in Sydney to Hobart race

SYDNEY (AFP) — Line-honours favourite Brindabella surged into the lead of the Sydney to Hobart yacht race Saturday as rough seas and high winds forced the retirement of five boats overnight.

When it reported in 40 kilometres north of Montague Island early Saturday, Australian maxi Brindabella held a 3.2 km lead over Hong-Kong-registered pocket maxi Exile. The leader was 208 km into the 1,008 km race.

Eight kilometres further astern was Ragamuffin, captained by veteran Syd Fischer.

Brindabella, a 22-metre maxi, has twice finished runner-up in its four starts. But on Saturday it prospered in the turbulent 35-knot conditions that battered the fleet and

forced the Swedish-registered early leader Nicorette back to fourth.

The top 10 was rounded out by Bermilla, Motorola Young Australia, PL Lease Future Shock, Marchioness, Valtair and Bright Morning Star.

But the gusty conditions took their toll. The list of retirees swelled to seven with five more yachts withdrawing overnight. They were Assassin, Midnight Rambler, Rapsallion, Southerly and She's Apples II, which had to restart the race late Friday after suffering early damage to its hull.

Weona Winna and Team Jaguar withdrew on the opening day of the 53rd annual blue-water classic.

Heavy rain and more strong southerly winds are forecast Saturday.

## Nagano Olympics parade may hurt some national pride

TOKYO (AFP) —

Mongolian Kyokushuzan's pride may

hurt when he joins 70 other fully attired sumo wrestling stars in the parade of nations at the opening ceremony of the Nagano Winter Olympics.

The stocky 24-year-old is assigned to carry the placard for Kazakhstan while other foreign sumo wrestlers march at the head of their compatriots in the February 7 ceremony.

Earlier in the two-hour ceremony, the wrestlers, averaging about 150 kilograms (330 lbs), will also show their form in a ground-purifying rite — stripped down to loinclothes and ceremonial aprons in sub-zero temperatures.

Kyokushuzan's home country, in grassy Asian highlands, has yet to enter any qualified athlete in the biggest-ever Winter Games expected to bring together at least 71 coun-

tries.

"I will call the sports minister at home and ask him about the situation," Kyokushuzan said Friday after a draw to match the wrestlers to individual countries.

Several nations were exempted from the selection process.

The top-ranked grand champion (yokozuka), Takanohana, will lead the hosts Japan while the United States, Argentina, Brazil and South Korea are led by their own favourite sons in the centuries-old Japanese sport.

Hawaiian-born Akebono, the second-ranked yokozuna, will carry the placard for the first nation to enter the Minami Nagano open-air stadium — Greece, the birthplace of the Olympics.

"I will give full-out support to any one from Mongolia," said Kyokushuzan, ranked fifth in sumo's premier

division, who once aspired to compete in the Olympics as a wrestler on a judoka.

He said he had nothing against Kazakhstan, one of Mongolia's neighbours and allies in the former Soviet bloc.

"I studied their language" (Russian) when I was in junior high school," he said. "But I am still hoping Mongolia will be able to qualify somebody."

Mongolia entered one athlete in short-track skating at the last Games in Lillehammer and four in speed-skating and cross-country skiing at Albertville in 1992.

A Mongolian cross-country skier is seen likely to qualify for Nagano if he manages to compete in a required number of international meets before the Games.

## Gaza beats West Bank after goalie blocked by Israel

JERICHO (AFP) — The Gaza Strip beat the West Bank in the first game of the first-ever Palestinian Football Championship Friday, despite the fact that Israel had held up Gaza's starting goalie from reaching the West Bank for the match.

The club from the Gaza town of Rafah defeated the West Bank's Al Bireh club, 3-2, in the West Bank town of Jericho in the first match of the two-game championship, which has been plagued by Israel's control over movement between the two territories.

Although most of the Gaza team received the necessary permits to enter the West Bank, Israel had held up the permits for three of the players, including the starting goalie, said Palestinian Football Union official Badr Mekki.

The three finally arrived in Jericho during the final minutes of the game, too late to play but in time to celebrate the victory.

A contingent of around 200 Gazan students and Palestinian Authority employees were on hand to cheer on their team.

But since permit restrictions prevent the bulk of fans from attending the

championship, a second game is planned to be held in the Gaza Strip at a later date. The winner — on goals if the teams split the games — wins the first ever Palestine Cup.

The Gaza Strip match had been scheduled for last Friday, but heavy rains scuttled the match and the West Bank players had to return home immediately since their permits allowed them to stay in Gaza only 24 hours.

Palestinians are required to obtain a permit from Israel to move from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip and vice versa, but permits are frequently rejected for the slightest "security reason."

The Palestinians have been unable to field a unified national team because of difficulties getting players from the two areas on the same field for practice, union officials say.

So now all games abroad are played either by a fully Gazan or West Bank team.

## United down Everton

LONDON (AFP) —

Manchester United rested several star players but still powered six points clear at the top of the English Premiership after a comfortable 2-0 win over fallen giants Everton on Friday.

Goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel was sent home after arriving at Old Trafford with a heavy cold before United boss Alex Ferguson decided to leave key forwards Ryan Giggs and Teddy Sheringham on the bench.

But the reigning champions provided ominous evidence of their strength in depth by brushing aside second-bottom Everton courtesy of goals from Henning Berg and Andy Cole.

United's cause was helped after title challengers Chelsea and Blackburn were held to draws by Wimbledon and Sheffield Wednesday respectively.

Everton boss Howard Kendall slammed his players after watching them slump to their 11th Premiership defeat of the season at Old Trafford.

"It was an embarrassing 90 minutes, to be honest. It was men against boys. The scoreline flattered us. Elsewhere, Stan Collymore put his personal problems behind him to help Aston Villa to a crushing 4-1 over struggling Tottenham.

Collymore, who was charged by police with assaulting his former girlfriend in a nightclub on Christmas Eve, boosted his meagre goal tally to four in 22 games with two late

strikes. The £7 million signing from Liverpool struck from close range to make it 3-1 before curling in a stunning free-kick to seal the rout in the final minute.

Villa midfielder Mark Draper was also in outstanding form, scoring Villa's first two goals. Colin Calderwood earlier equalised for sad Spurs with what proved to be no more than a consolation goal.

Liverpool manager Roy Evans breathed a sigh of relief after watching his strikers waste a string of good chances before wrapping up an impressive 3-1 victory over Leeds.

Third-placed Chelsea are 11-2 second favourites behind United to win the title, but manager Ruud Gullit said expectations had grown too great at the west London club after watching his side grind out a dull 1-1 draw with Wimbledon.

Arsenal survived a late fightback to breathe fresh life into their flagging title challenge with a hard-fought victory over Martin O'Neill's Leicester.

Newcastle midfielder David Batty faces a three-match ban after he was dismissed for the second time this season in his side's 1-0 defeat at Derby.

West Ham's fine home form continued with a 1-0 home victory over struggling Coventry courtesy of a 17th minute strike by former Newcastle striker Paul Kitson. Coventry's misery was compounded by the dismissal of George Boateng, a recent signing from Feyenoord, for two bookable offences.

Bolton and Barnsley battled each other to a 1-1 draw at the Reebok Stadium for a result that does little for either side's fight for survival.

Macedonian international Georgi Hrisov gave Barnsley the lead after 20 minutes before Bolton's Icelandic defender Gudni Bergsson scored a superb equaliser with a stunning 35-yard shot.

Crystal Palace were left searching for their first home win of the season after being held to a 1-1 draw by Southampton.

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	PHILADELPHIA "1"	PHILADELPHIA "2"	PLAZA	CONCORD	GALLERIA 1	GALLERIA 2	NOW ON DAILY
	George Clooney & Nicole Kidman ... in	Mickey Rourke & Angie Everhart ... in	Nicholas Cage ... in CON AIR Shows: 12:30, 3:00, 6:30	CONCORD "1" MR. BEAN 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	ABDOUN WALT DISNEY'S	ABDOUN Harrison Ford ... in	THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE
	THE PEACEMAKER Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	ANOTHER 9-1/2 WEEKS Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	AL MASEER (Arabic) Nour Al Sharif Shows: 8:30, 10:45  HERCULES Shows: 11:00, 5:00	CONCORD "2" MURDER 1600 Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	AIR FORCE ONE Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45	Starring Hisham Yanes and Amal Dabbas  For reservations call: 640155, 625155



## Sonics defeat Kings; Spurs win

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Rik Smits took advantage of the absence of Rony Seikaly and scored 15 of his 20 points in the first quarter as the Indiana Pacers cruised to a 107-81 victory over the Orlando Magic on Friday night.

Fred Hoiberg added a season-high 20 points - 15 coming in the fourth quarter when the outcome was already decided.

Smits, guarded by Danny Schayes in the first quarter because Seikaly was out with the flu, shot 9-of-12 in the first half and wasn't needed after the midpoint of the third quarter as Indiana was building a lead that grew as high as 32 points.

Indiana shot a season-high 63 per cent from the field in winning its eighth consecutive home game. Charlotte Hornets 96, Cleveland Cavaliers 88: At Charlotte, North Carolina, David Wesley scored six of his 20 points in the final 3:36 to help Charlotte over Cleveland, which lost Shawn Kemp and Brevin Knight for long stretches with injuries.

Wesley Person had 16 of his 18 points in the second half for the Cavaliers, who lost to the Hornets for the 11th time in 14 games.

Minnesota Timberwolves 116, New Jersey Nets 96: At Minneapolis, Stephen Marbury bowed to the crowd as he exited the court after keying a 16-0 run in the fourth quarter that carried Minnesota past New Jersey.

Marbury walked to the end of the floor and bowed to the fans after scoring six of his 22 points and forcing Sam Cassell to foul out during the deciding run, which began with the wolves clinging to an 82-79 lead.

Miami Heat 88, Detroit Pistons 74: At Auburn Hills, Michigan, the Miami Heat extended their record 3-point streak to 320 consecutive games, making nine 3s — including five toward the end of the second and third quarters — in a victory over Detroit.

Voshon Lenard, Jamal Mashburn and Tim Hardaway hit 3-pointers in the final 88 seconds of the second quarter to give the heat a 49-38 halftime lead, and

Lenard hit two more and Hardaway one to close the third quarter with the Heat leading 69-53.

Washington Wizards 97, Dallas Mavericks 95: At Dallas, Calbert Cheaney had a key steal and layup with 10 seconds left to thwart Dallas' late rally as Washington won its sixth straight and extended the Mavericks' losing streak to 11 games.

Cheaney paced the wizards with 21 points, followed by Juwan Howard and Tracy Murray with 20 points each.

Dallas had a late 13-6 run and closed to 93-92 with 22.7 seconds left on a 3-point by Dennis Scott.

Rod Strickland made two free throws with 13.6 seconds left, pushing Washington's lead to 95-92, and cleanly then stole Robert Pack's inbound pass and went in for a solo layup for a 97-92 lead.

San Antonio Spurs 101, Boston Celtics 86: At San Antonio, David Robinson reached 15,000 career points, scoring 34 as San Antonio won its seventh straight.

Robinson reached the plateau in the second quarter when he scored his 13th point. He is 78th on the National Basketball Association's career scoring list.

Tim Duncan added 23 points, 15 rebounds and a career-high eight blocked shots and Monry Williams added 16 points.

The Celtics, who shot only 41.6 per cent from the field, had their four-game winning streak snapped. Antoine Walker led Boston with 21 points.

Golden State Warriors 81, Denver Nuggets 69: At Denver, Erick Dampier matched his career-high with 19 points as Golden State completed a holiday-interrupted, cold-to-back sweep of back-to-back games.

Joe Smith added 14 points, Bimbo Coles had 10 and Donyell Marshall grabbed nine rebounds for the Warriors, who won for the fifth time in their last 10 games — including a 12-point home victory over Denver on Tuesday.

Milwaukee Bucks 99, Atlanta Hawks 94, over-



Orlando Magic forward Horace Grant shoots over the outstretched arm of Indiana Pacers forward Chris Mullin (L) and leaping Pacers forward Antonio Davis (R) as the two teams clashed at Market Square Arena (Reuters photo)

time: Playing at home, Milwaukee prevented Atlanta from setting an NBA record for consecutive overtime victories by beating the Hawks behind 14 points and 16 rebounds from Tyrone Hill.

The Hawks had won 11 consecutive overtime games, a streak that dated back to the 1994-95 season. It tied the record set by San Antonio from Nov. 13, 1979, to Feb. 8, 1983.

Elliot Perry, playing in place of the injured Terrell Brandon, had 17 points in 38 minutes and shot 8-for-13 from the floor.

Phoenix Suns 118, Vancouver Grizzlies 100: At Vancouver, British Columbia, Cedric Ceballos equalled a season high with 22 points and Jasoo Kidd had 13 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists as Phoenix defeated Vancouver.

Ceballos, starting in place of Cliff Robinson, had 17 points in the first half as the Suns won their fourth straight.

Antonio McDyess chipped in 16 points for the Suns and Danny Manning came off the bench for 14 points and seven rebounds.

Seattle Supersonics 111, Sacramento Kings 95: At Sacramento, Cali-

fornia, Vin Baker had 26 points and 16 rebounds and Gary Payton had 22 points and 12 assists as Seattle, with a second-half surge, defeated Sacramento.

It was the 16th win in 19 games for Seattle, which held Mitch Richmond to one field goal over the final 14 minutes and used a 22-7 run in the third quarter to pull away for good.

Sacramento held a 65-64 lead midway through the third quarter before Sam Perkins made two 3-pointers during Seattle's run.

Los Angeles Lakers 118, Los Angeles Clippers 114, overtime: In The Los Angeles suburb of Inglewood, Nick Van Exel scored 30 points and Rick Fox added seven of his 20 in overtime as the Los Angeles Lakers outlasted the cross-town Clippers 118-114 Friday night.

Loenzen Wright scored a career-high 32 points and grabbed 15 rebounds for the Clippers, who are 5-30 at the forum since moving from San Diego to Los Angeles in 1984.

Wright, who became the first member of the Clippers to have a 30-point outing this season, is averaging 17 rebounds over his last six games.

## 1st Division Handball Championship

### Ahli lead standings with 5 matches left

By Roufan Nahhas  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — With five matches remaining until the end of the second leg of Handball's First Division Championship, fifth placed Amman Saturday scored a precious 27-26 win over Umm Jozeh.

Over the weekend, Al Ahli took over the lead in the standings with 23 points after a 32-24 (14-10) win over Al Salt while Yarmouk Al Shouneh lost a 27-18 (12-10) to fourth placed Al Hussein and are still struggling at the other end of the standings with 2 points.

Third placed Al Arabi still have the chance to move to the top if they can beat Al Salt and Al Ahli in their next matches.

The last week will be crucial in determining who will win the 8-team race.

Amman 27 Umm Jozeh 26: The match was competitive, with Umm Jozeh giving Amman a hard time especially in the second half.

Umm Jozeh's bad luck was enough to give the two point win to Amman 27-26.

Al Ahli 32 Al Salt 24: Al Ahli depending on their strong defence were able to give their opponents some hard time in getting to the goal.

Al Ahli played a fast match with accurate passes from the beginning and easily penetrated through Al Salt's defence.

Al Ahli surprised their opponents with accurate hits by Mohammed Hamarsheh and Mohammed Taha who led depending on their long experience.

#### STANDINGS

Team	W	D	L	Gf	Ga	Pts
Al Ahli	11	1	-	282	299	23
Salh	10	1	1	392	298	21
Arabi	10	-	2	419	326	20
Hussein	7	1	5	381	356	15
Amman	4	1	8	387	427	9
Umm Jozeh	3	1	10	339	408	7
Kufranjeh	2	1	10	356	445	5
Y. Shouneh	1	-	12	312	409	2

Kufranjeh withdrew

#### Schedule of remaining matches

Al Ahli vs Al Hussein	Dec. 28	4.00 PM
Al Salt vs Al Arabi	Dec. 28	5.30 PM
Amman vs Y. Shouneh	Dec. 30	4.00 PM
Al Salt vs Kufranjeh	Dec. 31	4.00 PM
Al Ahli vs Al Arabi	Dec. 31	5.30 PM

All matches will be held at Sports Palace.

Al Ahli ended the first half 14-10.

The second half witnessed more exciting play from Al Ahli after increasing the pressure and moving fast against Al Salt's weak defence. Al Ahli were able to end the match 32-24.

## NFL PLAYOFFS

Wild Cards  
Saturday, Dec. 27  
Minnesota at New York Giants (1730 GMT)  
Jacksonville at Denver (2100 GMT)  
Sunday, Dec. 28  
Miami at New England (1730 GMT)  
Detroit at Tampa Bay (2100 GMT)

Divisional Playoffs  
Saturday, Jan. 3  
Denver, Jacksonville, or New England at Pittsburgh (1730 GMT)  
Detroit, Minnesota or Tampa Bay at San Francisco (2100 GMT)

Sunday, Jan. 4  
Detroit, N.Y. Giants or Tampa Bay at Green Bay (1730 GMT)  
Denver, Jacksonville, or Miami at Kansas City (2100 GMT)

Conference Championships  
Sunday, Jan. 11  
Divisional playoff winners, to be announced  
Super Bowl  
Sunday, Jan. 25  
American Conference champion Vs. National Conference Champion (2300 GMT)  
Pro Bowl  
Sunday, Feb. 1 — AFC Vs. NFC

## GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF  
& TAMAR HIRSCH

#### CAUGHT IN THE END

Both vulnerable. East deals.

**NORTH**  
♠ A Q 7 6 5 2  
♥ A Q J 3  
♦ 7  
♣ J 4

**EAST**  
♠ K 10  
♥ K 9 6 5  
♦ A K Q 8 6 2  
♣ A 7

**WEST**  
♠ 4  
♥ 10 8 7  
♦ 8 4 3  
♣ K Q 3 2 5 3

**SOUTH**  
♠ J 9 8 3  
♥ 4 2  
♦ J 10 5  
♣ A 10 9 2

The bidding:  
EAST: 1♣, 2♦, 3♦, 4♦, 5♦, 6♦, 7♦, 8♦, 9♦, 10♦, 11♦, 12♦, 13♦, 14♦, 15♦, 16♦, 17♦, 18♦, 19♦, 20♦, 21♦, 22♦, 23♦, 24♦, 25♦, 26♦, 27♦, 28♦, 29♦, 30♦, 31♦, 32♦, 33♦, 34♦, 35♦, 36♦, 37♦, 38♦, 39♦, 40♦, 41♦, 42♦, 43♦, 44♦, 45♦, 46♦, 47♦, 48♦, 49♦, 50♦, 51♦, 52♦, 53♦, 54♦, 55♦, 56♦, 57♦, 58♦, 59♦, 60♦, 61♦, 62♦, 63♦, 64♦, 65♦, 66♦, 67♦, 68♦, 69♦, 70♦, 71♦, 72♦, 73♦, 74♦, 75♦, 76♦, 77♦, 78♦, 79♦, 80♦, 81♦, 82♦, 83♦, 84♦, 85♦, 86♦, 87♦, 88♦, 89♦, 90♦, 91♦, 92♦, 93♦, 94♦, 95♦, 96♦, 97♦, 98♦, 99♦, 100♦, 101♦, 102♦, 103♦, 104♦, 105♦, 106♦, 107♦, 108♦, 109♦, 110♦, 111♦, 112♦, 113♦, 114♦, 115♦, 116♦, 117♦, 118♦, 119♦, 120♦, 121♦, 122♦, 123♦, 124♦, 125♦, 126♦, 127♦, 128♦, 129♦, 130♦, 131♦, 132♦, 133♦, 134♦, 135♦, 136♦, 137♦, 138♦, 139♦, 140♦, 141♦, 142♦, 143♦, 144♦, 145♦, 146♦, 147♦, 148♦, 149♦, 150♦, 151♦, 152♦, 153♦, 154♦, 155♦, 156♦, 157♦, 158♦, 159♦, 160♦, 161♦, 162♦, 163♦, 164♦, 165♦, 166♦, 167♦, 168♦, 169♦, 170♦, 171♦, 172♦, 173♦, 174♦, 175♦, 176♦, 177♦, 178♦, 179♦, 180♦, 181♦, 182♦, 183♦, 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## Centrists win majority in IAF executive committee elections

By Tareq Ayyoub  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Centrists have won an overwhelming majority in weekend elections for the 13-member executive committee of the powerful Islamic Action Front Party (IAF), analysts said on Saturday.

Friday's vote came a week after elections for the IAF shura council, the party's highest decision-making body, produced similar results — quelling fears of increased tension with both the government and IAF allies in an eight-party opposition coalition.

Former Senator Abdul-Latif Arabiyat, a "dove," became IAF chief by acclamation while his moderate predecessor, Ishaq Farhan, took the helm of the 120-seat shura council.

Dr. Farhan, who has already served twice as IAF secretary-general, could not re-nominate himself in line with party rules. "Neither the hawks nor the doves won in the elections for the two bodies which have brought to the surface a new national leadership of centrists," one political analyst said.

"Dr. Arabiyat is an acceptable person for all parties, including the government," said political analyst Ziad Abu Ghannieh, a former Muslim Brotherhood leader.

"And he will manage to bring the unity back to the group," he told the Jordan Times.

The IAF, the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, has been beset by internal feuds and personal rivalries since its decision to boycott the Nov. 4 parliamentary elections in protest against government policies.

Dr. Arabiyat and Dr. Farhan

### NEWS ANALYSIS

— both veteran politicians who have long advocated policies of moderation and coexistence with the regime — and the lineup of their councils, will weaken the clout of "hawks," analysts said.

The recent crisis between the government and the Islamists over a perceived crackdown on public freedoms, tipped the balance in favour of hard-liners and fuelled speculation inside the IAF that they would take over.

Yaser Za'atreh, a well-informed Islamist analyst, said the results of the two elections have also quashed fears of a possible split in the group following the decision to boycott last month's elections, the first since Jordan signed its 1994 peace treaty with Israel.

"All attempts to cast doubts over the future of the party and the possible creation of a new Islamist party have gone with the wind," said Mr. Za'atreh.

"The elections have formed a new group which represents the grassroots of the Brotherhood," he said.

"They are neither hawks nor

doves or pro-government or pro-boycott (of parliamentary elections). Most of the council's members do believe that the decisions of the party should be guided by prevailing circumstances."

Jordan's Brotherhood, among the country's oldest groups, has long advocated dialogue to achieve their goals. Contrary to other Arab states that have banned the brotherhood, Jordan allowed them to operate in the country's political life.

Newspaper columnists and analysts have described 10 of the 13-seat council as "centrists."

Many said Dr. Farhan and Dr. Arabiyat will have to work hard to bring "unity and harmony" back to the IAF and reactivate its role on Jordan's political map.

"In the past six years, the party was merely ink on paper and its effect was hardly seen," said Mr. Abu Ghannieh.

"The new council should be able to expand the party's base and attract new members."

The 15 deputies in the previous Lower House failed to obstruct the passage of the peace treaty with Israel, their avowed enemy. Many critics also say the movement has failed to come out with practical moves to bar normalisation of ties with Israel and help solve many of the day-to-day problems facing Jordanians.

"The real challenge that faces

the group is how to find a way out following their decision to boycott the elections," said Mr. Za'atreh. "They have to find a way to compensate the absence of a strong Parliament in the country."

With 64 centrists and pro-government deputies, the newly-elected parliament will have to look into government plans to amend three major democracy-related laws — political parties, press freedoms and professional unions.

Many fear the amendments would further tighten screws on freedoms launched after His Majesty King Hussein set off democratic reforms in 1989.

Of the 120 shura council members, 114 attended Friday's ballot to fill the executive committee of the IAF, formed in 1993.

Nine of the 13-member executive committee supported the decision to boycott the polls. They are: Salim Falaht, Jamil Abu Baker, Ahmad Kafaween, Na'el Zaidan, Hamam Saad, Saoud Abu Mahfouz, Ahmad Koufahi, Zuhair Abu Raghib and Ziad Khalifah.

The three others opposed the boycott decision. They are: Hamzeh Mansour, Abdul Raheem Akour and Tareq Tal.

However, analysts said hard-liners won a majority in the IAF's central court whose duties include dismissing members who violate party rules.

## Iraq looks to resume oil exports after Annan's approval 'expected in a week'

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraqi Oil Minister Amer Rashid said Saturday that Baghdad expects to resume oil exports under the U.N. oil-for-food accord within a week.

"Iraq is going to resume its crude exports as soon as U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan has approved the aid distribution plan that we submitted to him two days ago, and we expect that will happen in a week," Mr. Rashid told reporters.

Iraq suspended oil exports when the third six-month phase of the oil-for-food deal came into effect on Dec. 5 to protest at the slow authorisation by Annan's office of imports of food and medicines.

Under the accord, which cases seven-year-old sanctions, Iraq can sell \$2 billion of oil every six months to pay for humanitarian supplies.

Iraq had said it would only resume exporting oil under the U.N. oil-for-food deal once Mr. Annan had approved the humanitarian distribution plan.

Iraq claims large consignments of food and medicine remain undelivered from the first two phases of the deal, which first came into effect in December 1996, and accuses British and U.S. representatives of deliberately impeding import authorisations.

Iraq argues that the U.N. should be obliged to authorise delivery of humanitarian imports within the same six-month period that the oil exports are made to pay for them.

Iraq would have "no problem resuming exports" of oil as soon as it wanted to, Mr. Rashid said.

"Iraq has large quantities of oil in storage tanks at the Turkish oil depot of Ceyhan," he said.

Iraq makes nearly 70 per cent of its U.N.-authorised oil exports via a pipeline through Ceyhan from Kirkuk in northern Iraq to Yumurtalik on Turkey's Mediterranean coast. The remainder is made by tanker from Iraq's Gulf ports.

## Iceland-chartered plane packed with Christmas gifts lands in Iraq

BAGHDAD (AP) — A plane bearing medicine and an Icelandic Santa Claus loaded with Christmas presents landed in Iraq Friday, the second flight of U.N.-approved humanitarian aid to arrive here in two days.

Separately, the Iraqi leadership has said the United States is likely to attack the Iraqi president's palaces with chemical and biological weapons.

In Washington, a spokesman for U.S. President Bill Clinton said the Iraqi allegation was so "absurd and ridiculous" as to be unworthy of official comment.

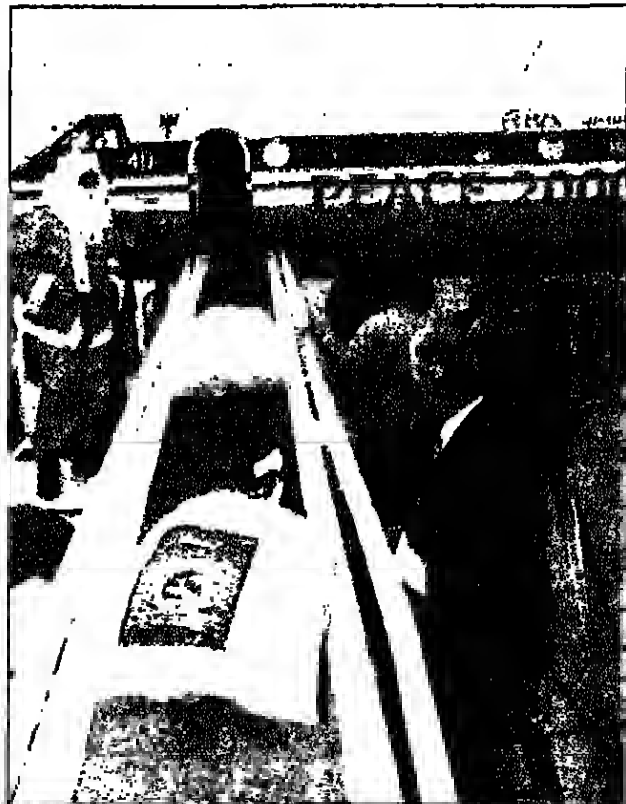
At an airbase west of Baghdad, Santa, an unusual sight in Muslim-majority Iraq, stepped out of a plane with a sack of gifts on his back and told reporters: "Stop killing my children."

Referring to the U.N. trade embargo against Iraq which has caused extensive malnutrition, Santa said: "Violence leads to more violence. Stop using children in politics."

The plane was chartered by the Icelandic charity Peace 2000 Institute in collaboration with an Italian group called Bridge to Baghdad. It was delayed by a day owing to technical failures en route.

The head of the institute, Thor Magnusson, told reporters on arrival that, as with his fellow passenger Santa, he was calling on world leaders "to stop harming the children because children are not a political weapon."

The Iraqi government says the sweeping sanctions imposed after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait have caused the death of hundreds of thousands of children. A recent U.N. report said they



Santa helps to unload Christmas gifts after arriving in Baghdad Friday. A plane chartered by an Icelandic charity landed in Iraq on Friday, bringing Christmas gifts and medicine for Iraqi children hit by U.N. sanctions, the Iraqi news agency INA reported (Reuters photo)

bad inflicted widespread malnutrition.

Peace 2000 has undertaken humanitarian operations on behalf of children injured by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in Belarus and children in the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo.

Its founder, Mr. Magnusson, a businessman and former presidential candidate in Iceland, was given the Gandhi Humanitarian Award by the U.S.-based Gandhi Foundation in 1996.

On Thursday, a Russian plane carrying 5 tonnes of medical supplies arrived in Baghdad. On board were 21 members of the ultranationalist Liberal Democratic party, which is led by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, who is opposed to the sanctions.

Both flights obtained U.N. clearance as, although the sanctions do not bar Iraq from importing food and medicine, all imports of humanitarian goods have to be approved by the world body's Sanctions Committee.

The U.N. Security Council says the sanctions — which ban the sale of oil, Iraq's main export — will not be lifted until Iraq elimi-

inates all its weapons of mass destruction.

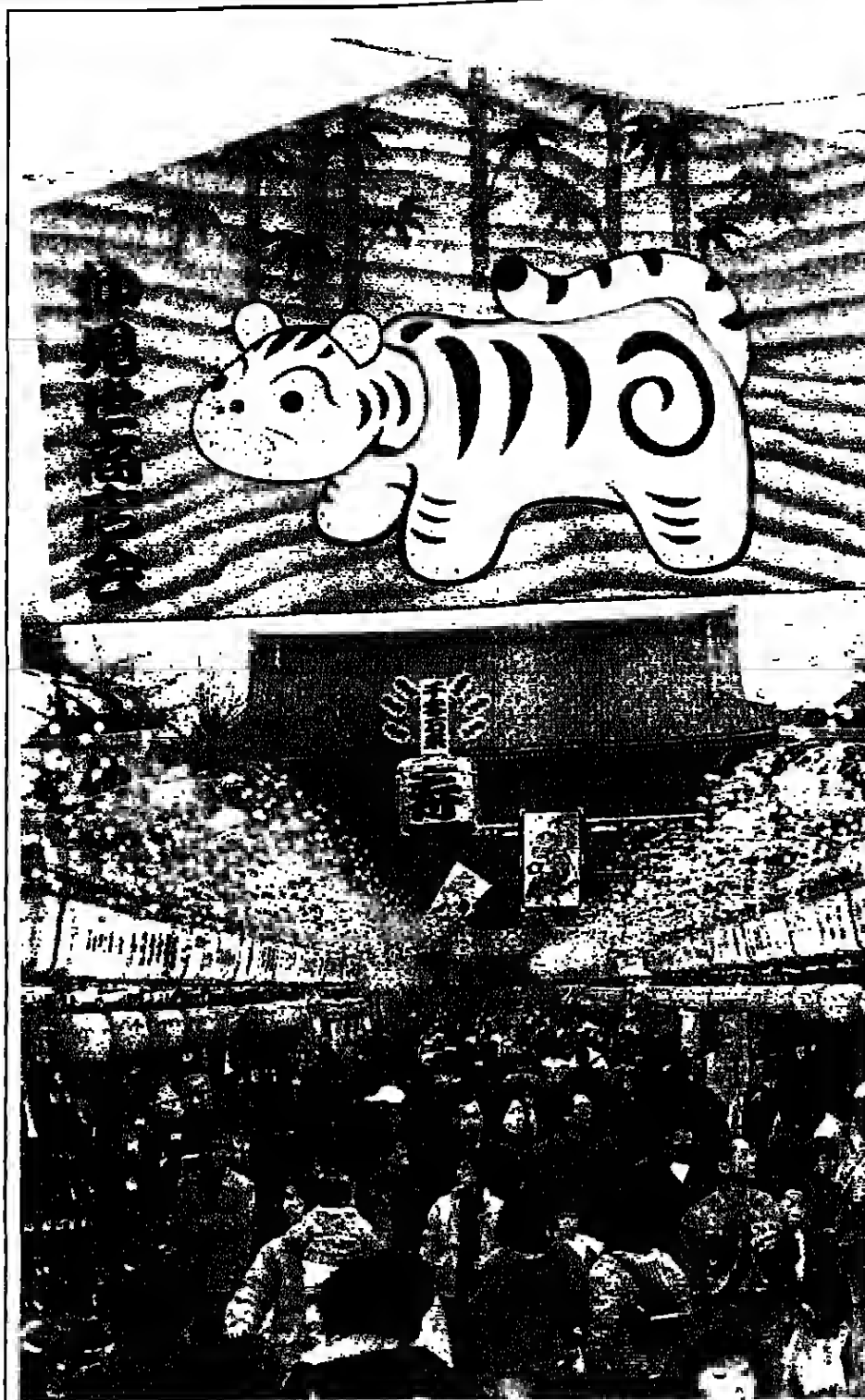
Meanwhile, a joint meeting of the Revolutionary Command Council and the ruling Baath Party executive issued a statement Friday accusing the U.S. of "spreading rumours" that Iraq was hiding chemical and biological weapons in President Hussein's palaces.

America was likely to attack the palaces with "chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction in order to say afterwards that its claims are true," the official Iraqi news agency quoted the statement as saying.

The meeting was chaired by President Hussein.

Iraq is currently engaged in a long-running dispute with the U.N. weapons inspectors who suspect that evidence of mass destruction weapons is being hidden in some 60 sites, including about 40 presidential palaces.

Iraq has refused to grant access to the sites, but the inspectors — with Security Council backing — say their mandate gives them unfettered access.



GETTING READY FOR THE YEAR OF THE TIGER: Year-end shoppers crowd a passageway in the precincts of the Sensoji Temple at Asakusa, in downtown Tokyo Saturday. A votive of a tiger hangs over the passageway. The next 1998 is 'Year of Tiger' in the Chinese zodiac calendar (AP Photo)

## Israeli FM threatens to resign unless two conditions fulfilled

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy threatened Friday to resign unless the government proceeds with a military withdrawal in the West Bank and changes the proposed budget.

"I won't have anything to do with a government which doesn't respect its commitments to the peace process and social justice," Mr. Levy told Israeli television.

Mr. Levy heads the centrist Geshet Party whose five members of parliament are part of the governing Likud coalition headed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The foreign minister stressed that the military pullback from rural parts of the West Bank, already several months behind schedule, is expected "to concern a two-figure percentage which could be, for example, 10 or 11 per cent."

"If the government refused, it would be gambling dangerously with peace, and I would be ready to pay the price personally," he said.

According to the press, Mr. Netanyahu is under pressure from settlers and more conservative members of his coalition who want to limit the military redeployment to 6-8 per cent.

cent.

The United States has made it known that it wants to see a significant redeployment in the West Bank, and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat is demanding a retreat from 30 per cent of the territory.

The Palestinian National Authority directly controls three per cent of the West Bank and administers another 27 per cent which is under Israeli military control.

According to Israeli accords with the Palestine Liberation Organisation, the Jewish state is to carry out three military retreats in the area before mid-1998.

On the proposed 1998 budget, Mr. Levy said in recent parliamentary discussions that Mr. Netanyahu had committed himself in a July letter to maintaining social measures.

"If the prime minister doesn't respect his commitments, there will be no more government," Mr. Levy threatened.

Mr. Netanyahu has suffered a series of setbacks in the Knesset, or parliament, in recent days.

Speaker of parliament Dan Tichon sent the 1998 budget back to the finance committee Thursday after some Likud coalition deputies voted against it.

Among them was Health Minister Yehosha Matza, who voted with the opposition to protest against cuts in health care.

The Geshet deputies voted against the budget or abstained, while the nine MPs of the Likud-allied National Religious Party abstained during the first vote.

A measure must pass three times before it becomes law.

Under Israel's 1995 health law, all Israelis are entitled to health coverage provided by private insurance funds which are in turn funded by the state through health levies.

But the new law would allow health funds to design their own "baskets" and charge extra fees for a wide variety of services, particularly long-term geriatric care.

In addition, health coverage currently assured directly by the state for newborn babies and mothers will in future be covered by health funds.

Mr. Matza said the new plan would "create a two-tier health system, one for the rich and another for the poor."

The budget, which would cut \$600 million from current expenditures, is expected to be voted on for the second and third time before Dec. 31.

## Egypt's prosecutor general refers Turk ship crew members to court

PORT SAID (AP) — An Egyptian prosecutor Friday charged a Turkish sea captain and his first mate with kidnapping eight Egyptians who tried to impound his ship, police officials said.

It is not known if Egypt will request the extradition of the captain, Naci Usalki, and his assistant, Hilmi Elder, who were arrested when they sailed into the Turkish port of Istanbul eight weeks ago.

The incident took place on Oct. 23 when a party of Egyptian lawyers, port police, court officials and shipping agents boarded the

Turkish ship, the Obo Engin, shortly before it sailed out of the northern end of the Suez Canal.

The officials served the captain with a court order impounding the ship as part of proceedings by a shipping agent who claimed the Obo Engin's owners owed him \$336,000.

Captain Usalki ignored the order and steamed out to sea too fast for Egyptian patrol boats to stop him.

On Friday, Prosecutor General Mohammad Sabri charged Capt. Usalki here with "kidnapping and taking hostages, resisting authority,

violating international law concerning sailing in the Suez Canal and not responding to port orders," the police said, speaking on customary condition of anonymity.

When Capt. Turkish police arrested Usalki in Istanbul, he claimed the Egyptians had boarded the ship in international waters where they had no authority. The Egyptians flew back to Cairo on Oct. 29, saying they had been treated roughly on the ship.

Under Egyptian law, the captain and mate can be tried in absentia.



### Stop that pudding!

LONDON (AP) — Security officers at Manchester airport have uncovered a new threat to public safety — the traditional English Christmas puddings that x-ray scanners are mistaking for semtex explosives. "The security system is designed to detect organic matter like semtex, and Christmas puddings have an unusual density which alerts the system," an airport spokesman said. Hundreds of Britons getting away for the holidays have taken along the puddings — made of flour, eggs, suet, dried fruit and spices — which ooze brandy and calories. Security officers have had to examine hundreds of bags before allowing them onto aircraft. "The system is simply doing its job and doing it extremely well," the spokesman said.

### Motorist, police exchange photographs

LONDON (AP) — A speeding motorist caught by a roadside camera tried to play a little joke when police sent a penalty notice. The notice included a photograph of the car, the date and the speed, and demanded payment of a \$ 65 fine. The motorist sent a photograph of a cheque. Superintendent Deryck Farmer told a newspaper in Crewe, Police sent back a photograph of a pair of handcuffs, and the motorist got the message. He mailed a cheque.

### St. Nicholas's remains will be for ever Bari's

BARI (AFP) — The mortal remains of Saint Nicholas, the patron saint of sailors and children, will rest eternally in Bari where they have lain for over 900 years, the curator of the Saint Nicholas study centre has pledged. Father Gerardo Cioffari spoke out against a claim lodged by the head of a Turkish "Santa Claus" foundation for restitution of the remains to Turkey. The remains of the saint were stolen from Myra in Turkey and brought in 1087 to the Adriatic city, where a basilica was constructed around them. Saint Nicholas, who had been the bishop of Myra, died in 326. The Christmas-tide character of Santa Claus is loosely based on the saint.

### German gets Christmas card — six years late

KRONACH (AFP) — One for the better-late-than-never file: a Christmas greeting card took six years to reach its destination, a mere 12 kilometres from the German town where it was posted, the bemused recipient revealed. Despatched on Dec. 20, 1991, in the southern town of Kronach, the letter arrived a few days ago at the home of Norbert Konradi in Mitwitz with no explanation for the extraordinary delay. After deliberation, the post office agreed to overlook the detail that postage was due on the letter.

### Italian scrooges take off with priest's sale

TERAMO (AFP) — Burglars lacking the season's spirit made off with a safe containing \$15,000 belonging to an Italian priest who was off celebrating Christmas mass. Officials said Father Pietro Cappelli came home after saying midnight mass in the small town of Roseti degli Abruzzi, 100 kilometres east of Rome, to find a hole in his wall where his safe and the cash used to be. Police found the window to his apartment, which neighbours his church, had been forced.

### Jordan Times Lottery Rules

No. 23, Dec. 28, 1997

Clip 20 coupons during the month of December, 1997 and fill in your name, address and telephone number on each, then mail to:

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Jordan Times

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